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FEAR GOD  
IN YOUR  
OWN VILLAGE

RICHARD MORSE



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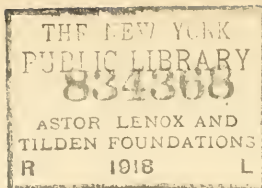


# FEAR GOD IN YOUR OWN VILLAGE

BY  
RICHARD MORSE



NEW YORK  
HENRY HOLT AND COMPANY  
1918



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Published March, 1918

THE QUINN & BODER CO. PRESS  
RAHWAY, N. J.



## TO MY WIFE

whose sense of humor and breadth of vision  
have brightened many a discouraging day.



## PREFACE

Here is the true story of an attempt to put the fear of God into an American rural community; that is, to bring order out of the chaos of its social and civic affairs, to put pride and co-operation in the place of suspicion and individualism, to make narrow prejudice and plain cussedness give way to sympathy and unselfish service.

Perhaps it will do you good—but it wasn't written for that purpose. It was written largely to explain to my wife why I am so frequently late to meals and why I have not spent more evenings in her dear presence.



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# FEAR GOD IN YOUR OWN VILLAGE

## CHAPTER I

### DEACON BOSTICK'S VOTE

I do not recall when I met Deacon Bostick. It was probably after my first or second church service in Hilldale. But the first I heard about him was one day when Deacon Gordon, our school principal, told me that I had "just about won Deacon Bostick over."

"Won him over?" I said. "*To* what, *from* what?"

"Why, he is the only member of the Consistory holding out against you. When he gives in we will give you a call to the church and make it unanimous."

"But I thought I was called and called unanimously before I came here," I protested.

"No, we are just trying you out. All of us on the Consistory except Bostick are for you and so are most of the congregation, but some of the old timers like Bostick are hard to win over."

"And you think I have been here simply candidating for this little church these last four weeks?" I demanded.

"Of course."

"Well, let me tell you something for the good of my soul," I said, considerably riled. "I am not candidating. I do not give a lonesome cuss whether Deacon Bostick or anybody else wants to vote for me or not. This church is not choosing or rejecting me. I am choosing it. I have come here to put the fear of God in it. I am going to stay, votes or no votes."

Gordon looked at me a moment and then slapped me on the shoulder as he broke into a hearty laugh. "Good for you," he cried, then hesitated a moment and added, "but be sure the town doesn't put the fear of man in you."



Thereupon I went to my room at Uncle Josiah Nichols' and kicked myself. "There you go, you cocky young fool," I said. "This is a beautiful way to start your ministry, strutting around with a chip on your shoulder. Now get down on your knees by your bed and pray. Ask the Lord for forgiveness and a teachable spirit." But my knees would not bend and my lips refused to utter anything but imprecations against Deacon Bostick and all his ilk. What right had they to think that a minister should please them? I would have them know that I was no one-horse exhorter looking for a job and coming to them because I couldn't find a better one. I was a graduate of College, University, and Seminary. I had had a year's experience as a social survey investigator ("snooper," the farmers called it) over the United States and was coming to this little town with a wealth of theory inside of me and a wealth of experience in front of me.

I had come as pastor of the church and

secretary of the Hilldale Neighborhood Association. The church was almost dead; in fact, it was only walking around to save funeral expenses. The Association was a civic organization, non-sectarian, made up of business men, wealthy residents and a few village people. It was three years old. It had been born in the mud, so to speak, for it owed its origin to a group of men getting together with the purpose of macadamizing a very bad road. When that had been accomplished and they had lifted themselves out of the mud they had not disbanded but worked on until they had secured a public library. Then they had tackled the mosquito problem and set to work on a large scale draining, flooding or oiling swamps or marshy places and eliminating mosquito breeding places. Almost before they knew it they had made their organization permanent and called it their Neighborhood Association.

But neither the church nor the association had been able to support a man on full time

until, through the efforts of Mr. Townsend, the Association's president, they had united their forces and decided to secure one man in the dual capacity of resident minister and director of the Neighborhood Association. It had been exactly the sort of opening I had wanted—a combination of religious and social work in a rural community.

I was going to see what could be done in one country town. In fact, I was about to set the world afire. What right had the kindling to say it wouldn't burn? It ought to be mighty proud to have a part in the conflagration.

I argued all this for ten or fifteen minutes to the four walls of my room, and receiving no answer in reply I was convinced that I was right. As I was beginning to cool down there came a knock at the door and two young men of the village entered. They were George Biddle and James Stilwell. George was about thirty-three or thirty-four years of age, rather short, and partially bald. I learned later that he was a member of one

of the oldest families, and that he was a real estate and insurance broker. James was a young carpenter of twenty-one or twenty-two years, with a clean face and quiet voice. George did most of the talking.

“Would you help us start some sort of boys’ club here?” he said, after a rather embarrassed beginning. “There ain’t no place for us fellows to go except the saloons or to the other villages.”

“How many saloons are here?”

“Seven.”

“That is seven too many. How large is the village?”

“About a thousand.”

“Any clubs among the young people now?”

“Only what is left of the Sterling Athletic Club. It is made up of a dozen fellows. They meet in an old shoemaker’s shanty down near the station; don’t do anything and are just about played out. Then there is a volunteer fire department that meets over here in the shed near the school-house.

There are about forty members in that, but they don't do much either."

"Suppose you give me a few days to look over the situation and think out a plan. Meantime will you prepare a list of all the young men in town and then in about ten days call a mass meeting of these fellows at the fire department shed? I will be there and we will start something—I don't know what."

They agreed and took their departure. For the next few days I was too busy finding out what the town was made of to worry about Deacon Bostick or the Consistory votes. The more I found out the more I realized that there was a struggle coming if the fear of God was to be put into the town and the more I thought of Gordon's warning, "Be careful that the town doesn't put the fear of man in you."

I didn't make a careful house-to-house social survey until months later. For the present I wanted just the outstanding facts about the recreations of the young people. The village was typical of hundreds of com-

munities within a radius of thirty to fifty miles of any great American city, but there wasn't much consolation in that fact. Once it had been an agricultural neighborhood, but the spread of the neighboring city had increased land values from \$150.00 to \$1,500.00 an acre in a dozen years. The old farmers had been selling their farms and moving away. Most of the land had been bought up and turned into great estates by wealthy business men from the city. A few of these I had met and they promised to be interesting. But these only made up about ten or twelve per cent. of the population which totaled, as George had said, a little less than one thousand. The rest were largely gardeners, carpenters, masons, and laborers of various kinds. A few were commuters. Most of these were comparative newcomers, taking the place of the old farmers, who were either moving away or dying off.

The village was pretty well divided into "old timers" and "newcomers." The old timers were unselfishly shoving the burdens

of the community upon the shoulders of the newcomers, and the newcomers, graciously but firmly protesting that they would not think of superseding those who had worked so long and so well, were declining the community responsibilities with great thanks. The plain fact was that both old timers and newcomers had the same aversion to work. Between them, the recreations of the young people, the church, the public school, the roads, and all the other social institutions had been sadly neglected.

There were, as the boys had said, seven saloons in town, each with its pool room. There was no other place of amusement. Young people were starving for a good time. There was a deal of immorality. Three miles to the west was Dellwood, an overgrown, unincorporated hamlet of ten thousand or more, and to this town every evening from fifty to seventy-five persons, young and old, were going by railway train to movie show, dance hall, or street.

What was Deacon Bostick's vote to be

compared to trying to help remedy a situation like this? The Deacon, I decided, could go hang, or, if he preferred, he could fall head-first into his cistern and take his vote with him. I was going to get some clean recreations for this village.

I managed to get myself invited to a meeting of the Sterling Athletic Club down in the old shoemaker's shanty. Rough looking old place it was, about eight feet wide and ten feet long, with board walls, no carpet on the floor, an oil lamp, a few chairs, a bench, a table, and a three-legged stove. Half a dozen young fellows were there. Fred Black, a young contractor and builder, James Stilwell, Ed Skenlan and his father, Tom Skenlan, and two or three others. Most of them were either carpenters or masons. We played cards and swapped yarns that first evening, and the boys told me a little of the history of their club, how it had been started by a politician named Sterling, how it had had a golden age when its prowess in baseball and other athletics



had been the envy of all the country around, how local rivalries and friction had started over hotly contested games and umpires' decisions, how there had been no one to patch up the difficulties, and how when the opposition had been finally vanquished and there was no outside enemy to challenge they waxed fat and kicked each other until their organization had but a handful left and pinochle was their most violent exercise.

Two or three nights later I spent another evening in the shanty, and on the second or third evening after that I was made a member of the club. Then one rainy evening as we sat around the card table I told the boys I had a plan to propose. I proposed that with this club and the fire department as a nucleus we get together all the young fellows in town and furnish the whole village with plenty of clean recreation. It was a young man's job. Why should we wait for some one else to do it for us? I proposed that we do it ourselves by the following method:

Get up a petition to our Neighborhood Association asking them, first, to take us into their association as active members upon payment of our regular dues of \$1.00 a year; second, to commission us as a recreation department to furnish the whole village, old and young—our fathers and mothers and smaller brothers and sisters included—with plenty of clean recreation; and third, if we were successful after two years' work, to help us build in our village a neighborhood house including a good motion picture show, a social room, bowling alleys, pool table, village library, and a room for the village fire department.

We talked over that proposal for two hours that night. I think it was one of the most religious meetings I was ever in. Yes, the air was blue with smoke, the table was covered with cards, and the fellows lounged around in all sorts of comfortable positions. But here were a dozen young men seriously considering taking up an unselfish work for the good of the town, for the spiritual wel-

fare of the town, if you please. If that isn't religious, what is?

It took two or three meetings to thrash out details and make sure of just what we wanted. But finally every one of the members of the club signed the petition and then we called our mass meeting at the fire department shed. It will be long before I forget that meeting. The fire truck had been hauled out so as to make room for the thirty-five or forty fellows who had come to see what was up. They sat around the edges of the room on camp chairs, benches, boxes, or anything else that offered a seat. Everybody was talking before I entered, but the moment I came inside the door a funereal hush fell upon the group that lasted, in spite of all attempts to break it, until I had taken my departure. I called the meeting to order and made some sort of speech. I tried to introduce a little humor at the beginning of it but it fell flat, so I abandoned the attempt and went on to outline the same plan I had proposed to the Sterling Athletic Club. Con-

cluding I said, "Here is a plan. Now what do you want to do with it?"

Not a word. A minute or two passed.

"Any questions to ask?" Nary a question. Two or three more minutes passed.

"Any objections to offer?" Nary an objection. More minutes.

"Doesn't any one in this house have the power of speech?"

No one had.

"All right," I said, "think about this business for a week. Then we will meet here again one week from tonight and either put this plan over or bury it." I went to the door and turned to face the crowd once more, "Good night," I said.

Then in one voice every one answered, "Good night."

As I walked home I wondered at the meaning of their silence and of that last vociferous "good night." Was it the silence of disapproval, of bashfulness, or the fear to speak out before the crowd? I made up my mind that it was the latter. This town had

been so long without an organization or a leader that its young men had forgotten or never learned the American tradition of free discussion in public meetings. And somehow, as their "good night" rang in my ears, it seemed that there was in it the over tone of promise—even of wistfulness.

Anyway I wished I had that crowd of young fellows in church. That night as I lay listening to the chirping of the crickets I thought again of Deacon Bostick's pernicious vote and of Gordon's warning, "Be sure the town doesn't put the fear of man in you."

The following week the recreation department scheme was the talk of the town. The Sterling Athletic Club and the fire department became suddenly animated and held many meetings, called delinquent members to account, and collected much back dues. On Friday night we had another mass meeting and this time the silence was broken. Everybody broke it, sometimes all at once. Would we have a club house and where

would it be? The East End boys (who lived on the east side of the community) insisted it must not be on the west side, and the Station boys (who lived near the railroad station on the west side of the community) insisted that it must not be on the east side. A few thought it would be best not to separate themselves from the \$1.00 membership fee until the club was actually established. There was some little jealousy, too, that this scheme had been presented to the Sterling Athletic Club previous to the others. Did this mean that the Sterling Athletic Club boys were going to run the organization.

Underneath all this one thing was evident—everybody wanted the club and was taking it for granted. So the petition to the Neighborhood Association was presented and everybody signed it, making about forty-five signatures in all. One of the boys asked to be allowed to take the petition to a few fellows who had not been able to attend the meeting. He returned it Saturday with

eight more names, making fifty-three in all.

On Sunday morning we devoted our church service to the need of clean recreation for our village. The service had been announced by post cards sent to every Protestant family as far as we had their names. The church that morning saw many faces for the first time in a dozen years. I read the petition and used it as a text for my sermon. There was no oratory and less rhetoric in that sermon. It was simply a rather crude expression of what everybody wanted. It wound up with an appeal to the members of the congregation to give their support to the organization the fellows were proposing, and help it along in every way they could.

After the benediction I hurried back to the door and shook hands with the congregation. When all were out save a few, one rather elderly gentleman, of medium height, a bald head fringed with gray, and dark eyes that batted, slapped me on the shoulder. "Dominie," he said, "that is the best service

we ever had in this church. I tell you it was great. We hain't never had anything like it. I want to tell you I'm converted and I'm voting for you."

I said something about that being very nice, and I hoped he would help the boys all he could. He said that he would and went away. "Who was that gentleman?" I asked Mr. Gordon, who stood near.

"That old fellow you were just talking with? Why, that was Deacon Bostick."

I walked back to Josiah Nichols' house, pronouncing to the autumn leaves by the roadside much wisdom on the subject of country people and the country church. All one needed to do was to be practical and not lazy, and the Deacon Bosticks would all be converted and give up their narrow-mindedness. It was really very easy. But I had not yet lived with Deacon Bostick through the affair of the pump handle or the affair of the two chairs in the back of the church.



## CHAPTER II

### NEIGHBOR FREEMAN'S BARN

THE Directors granted the petition, of course, and received the signers as active members of the Neighborhood Association. They went further and turned the \$53.00 annual membership dues back to these new members in the form of an appropriation for the use of the Recreation Department. This was quite a blow to those who thought the whole scheme was an attempt on the part of the rich to fleece the poor. Just how they had figured that the rich were going to divide up this \$53.00 so that none of them would receive too large a share of the boodle was something of a mystery. However, they soon recovered from the blow and began to ask questions. "Where are you going to begin?" "How much recreation can you give a village with only \$53.00?" "It will be two years

before a Neighborhood House can be built. Meantime, where are you going to meet? There is no building in the neighborhood that can be used as a club house." That simply meant that there was no building upon whose front the words, "CLUB HOUSE," appeared in large capital letters.

I suppose every village contains an element of this sort—men and women who feed on suspicion and breathe discouragement. They are a dead weight in the community, for they drag their feet whenever some one tries to put the wheels of progress under the town. Their favorite maxim is, "It can't be done." Their greatest pride is the deadness of their village. They boast about it. Wonderful things, they admit, have been done in other towns but not in *this* place. "This is the most *peculiar* spot on the earth." Some time ago a retired farmer in one of these villages heard that there was going to be an eclipse of the moon. He hitched up his team and drove to a neighboring town to see it.

But the enthusiasm of the young men was

too warm to be cooled by this element. A suitable place for a temporary club house *was* a poser. But some one suggested that Neighbor Freeman had a barn near the center of the village which might be used for this purpose. Neighbor Freeman was quite willing to rent the barn for a nominal sum for club house purposes. It was just an old red barn, a road and a swamp in front of it, and a field behind it.

We needed a floor. The young men who were carpenters agreed that they would give their labor in putting one in if we could afford the material. We asked the local lumber dealer if he would let us have the material and trust the Lord for payment. He said he would. Then for a couple of weeks the fellows were busy nearly every night working by the light of lamps and lanterns putting in a dance floor, a movable partition, a chimney, and wiring the place for electric lights. When they had finished they still had just a barn—clean and white to be sure and with a dance floor—but with

no equipment, no games, no stove, no furniture, no anything, in short, but just a plain, bare barn.

At this juncture some one suggested that there were a lot of attics in our town where women stored the furniture that they got when they were married and many other household articles since. There might be enough equipment in these attics about the town to fit up a club room. It seemed worth trying, so we had printed and sent to every family in the neighborhood a notice listing a number of articles that could be used in a club room. "We want no citizen to feel," the notice read, "that he is under any obligation to inconvenience himself in any way and hope that none will sacrifice himself in his desire to show his good will to this Recreation Department. But if these articles, however battered or old, can be contributed to the temporary quarters they will be well cared for and well used, and we shall be very grateful."

The replies to that notice were interesting.

One man could only give a cuspidor. Another could give a second-hand pool table. Between those extremes we found, when the answers to this notice were all in, that we had the following equipment:

- 1 stove,
- 2 chandeliers,
- 2 phonographs,
- 1 chimney,
- 1 indoor baseball set,
- 1 pool table and pocket stops for same,
- 5 leather chairs,
- Whiting for the walls,
- 12 decks of cards,
- 1 second-hand piano and pianola,
- 1 cuspidor,
- 3 sets checkers,
- 3 sets dominoes,
- Boxing gloves,
- Half-dozen card tables,
- 1 reading lamp,
- 6 window shades,
- Seven dozen glasses and odds and ends of dishes,
- 24 camp chairs,
- 1 oil stove,
- 15 yards of matting,
- 1 water pitcher,
- 5 folding chairs,
- Several subscriptions to magazines,
- \$137.87 in cash.

The barn was no longer bare. The Sterling Athletic Club turned over its entire equipment of nine chairs, twenty cups, a coffee boiler, an iron pail, and its treasury of \$42.87—"everything down to spare shirt," as one of the boys put it.

Then we set to work. We organized our Executive Committee, made up of two of the Directors of the Neighborhood Association and five local business men. This Executive Committee appointed an Athletic Committee, a House Committee, and an Entertainment Committee.

The Athletic Committee organized a baseball team and two Boy Scout Troops. One of the Scout Troops died in infancy, but the other struggled along for a little while and then seemed to stand still. I happened to be Scout Master of this troop and was getting discouraged with the slow progress we were making. There were about fifteen boys in the troop and the limit of my ability seemed to have been reached when I had taught them how to tie five kinds of knots,

repeat the Scout Oath and the Scout Law, and to salute with three fingers. A generous rich man had offered to buy uniforms for the boys, but I declined the offer on the ground that we ought to earn our own uniforms. I cannot say that this decision was altogether popular with the boys. A uniform at that time cost \$4.80, which seemed to these youngsters an awful amount to squander on clothes. They would save up their nickels and pennies until they had about \$2.00 on hand and then spend it on something *useful* like a circus, or peanuts, or a soda fountain.

One day it occurred to me that if I could lower the limit perhaps one boy might get over and the other boys seeing his suit would be encouraged to work harder for their own. So I offered to pay for the hat for the first Scout who could save up enough money to buy the rest of his uniform. As the hat was worth \$1.25, this made it necessary to save only \$3.55. Two or three weeks after this announcement was made, one of the young

Scouts, Robert Jackson, came breathlessly into my office. (I had opened a little office near the railroad station and had secured the services of a girl to handle clerical work.) Robert counted out on my desk \$3.55, in nickels, dimes, and pennies and demanded to be measured at once for his uniform. I took his measurements, filled out the order, and sent it promptly to the Boy Scout Headquarters in the city. The following morning Robert again appeared, wanting to know if his suit had arrived. He came in two or three more times that day. By dire catastrophe that order was held up in New York for about three weeks during which Robert came to the office not less than one thousand times. On the afternoons of the last week he met the express trains as they came in. It was rather pathetic to see him watching eagerly the 2.45 express and then following the disappearing train down the track with eyes from which the hopefulness of youth had almost departed. One morning, however, by some



chance the package arrived in my office about three minutes before Robert. He rushed in with his knife open, cut the string, and pulled out the uniform. Now I had in the office, as I have said, a girl as clerk—a modest, retiring little Methodist. But it took physical force to prevent Robert from stripping and putting on his uniform in her presence. He finally compromised, agreeing to put on the trousers in his own home. A few minutes later he was parading up and down the street with a glory that Solomon never dreamed of. During the following week I ordered six more uniforms.

The House Committee began the administration of the club room with ideals as high as heaven and faith in human nature as beautiful as it was sweet. It proposed just two rules “no booze” and “no gambling.” “Let the honor system take care of any other regulations,” said the House Committee. I regret to say that we found these simple rules were not as effective as they should have been. A group of the younger

members whose energy exceeded their respect for law or property soon began to turn things upside down in the club room. They fenced with the pool cues and played the piano with their toes. Some became adept in juggling chairs and others developed physical grace by practicing the Salome dance on the pool table. Of course, if these fellows could have been detected in the process they would have been expelled. Although we had a moral certainty concerning some of them they were usually able to prove an alibi. In the course of four or five months the club room began to look and smell like a pig pen. Then we found it necessary to employ a janitor to keep the place clean and to maintain discipline. The cleaning part was not difficult, but we were unable to find any human being big enough to maintain discipline among these younger and more irresponsible boys. So one by one they were dropped from the membership. Some of them later recognized the error of their ways and rejoined the club and became staunch members.

Others cherish a grudge in their hearts to this day.

If the whole truth is to be set down here it must be recorded also that the rule against liquor was not always kept. On ordinary occasions we were safe. But at dances a number of the young men had an idea that a village dance was not complete unless there was much drinking of whiskey just outside the door. On at least one occasion a quantity of liquor was donated for this purpose by one of the local saloons with the evident intention of breaking up the Department. On another occasion two of the members broke up a dance by insisting on their right to maintain their honor by making mince meat of each other's faces. These members later made a public apology and their humiliation was a lesson to the rest of the Department.

The House Committee decided that a small charge for a pool game would be justifiable and would prevent some from monopolizing the table. A little box was tacked up near

the pool table and over it a notice to the effect that two cents a cue would be charged for each game. Would the members please drop the pennies in this box? It is only fair to say that the majority of the members dropped their pennies per request. But it must also be set down that very few of the pennies ever reached the Department treasury. For a while they disappeared from the box, a few at a time. But finally some benevolent young crook took the box and all and saved us the trouble of rescinding the regulation.

Experiences like these soon proved to us the need of law, of rules, and discipline. That part of the human race with which we were dealing was not yet ready for divine anarchy. A majority of the members might never need a law or a rule for their own conduct, but their safety and welfare had to be protected against the few who were lawless and prodigal.

The Entertainment Committee took upon its shoulders the task of furnishing, every

two weeks, an entertainment such as a dance, eucher, supper, or concert. They endeavored to pay the running expenses of the club room by these entertainments. The expenses ran from \$40.00 to \$45.00 a month, including rent, light, heat, and janitor's services. It was the custom at first for the Entertainment Committee to resign in a body at the close of each entertainment given. "Never again!" they cried as they viewed dirty dishes and disordered room on the morning after. Washing dishes and cleaning up in that old barn were not exactly joyful occupations. And when about half of the Committee failed to show up, as was usually the case, the other half had to do all the work. Hence the resignations.

After a few months of these experiences the Executive Committee thought that it would be better to have the Entertainment Committee elected in a meeting of members instead of being appointed by the chair. It was thought that election to this office would be something of an honor and would carry

with it more responsibility. We found what larger and older organizations, even governments of states and nations, have been finding, for several thousand years. The members elected popular men without regard to their executive ability. The first Entertainment Committee chairman that we elected conducted two or three public functions and then gave up and dropped out.

The second man elected to the chairmanship of this committee on the ground of his popularity introduced liquor at one or more of the entertainments and nearly ruined the Department. The third man seemed afraid to move lest he be criticized. He held his job for many weeks, but never gave more than one entertainment.

By this time the House Committee had learned that not only were laws necessary in their little portion of human society, but that *effective* government was not a necessary result of *popular* government. Thereafter the Executive Committee chose the chairman of the Entertainment Committee on a

basis of ability and character rather than popularity.

Such were some of our troubles in Neighbor Freeman's barn. This infant organization had all the diseases of infancy. Many a night we had to walk the floor with it and often we were ready to chuck it out the window. But it had a strong constitution and the breath of life did not depart from it. The world let it live because the world had need for it. An average of from twenty-two to twenty-five young men were meeting in that old barn nightly and they were learning with all their mistakes the first lessons of co-operation, respect for law and for the rights of others, self-sacrifice when necessary, and perseverance through difficulties. Upon the wall they had nailed their reason for existence, "THE PURPOSE OF THIS RECREATION DEPARTMENT IS TO FURNISH CLEAN RECREATION FOR THIS ENTIRE COMMUNITY, OLD AND YOUNG." In spite of their difficulties they stuck to that purpose. Their mothers and fathers came to the dances, and

brothers and sisters to the concerts and the "sings." Gradually, too, young fellows from neighboring villages began to come over on their motorcycles. "There isn't any such club as this in our town," they said. The membership began to grow.

After Neighbor Freeman's barn had been open for about six months a band suddenly blew into existence. It must have started by spontaneous combustion. Two of the young fellows who had been coming from a neighboring village—Carl and Emil Mankel—were musicians. It was around them that the band started. Some seventeen or eighteen young fellows had saved a little out of their wages and now began to appear at the barn with cornets, trombones, drums, French horns, etc. The Mankel boys were not the product of any school, but they had a natural knack for teaching. They must have had, for inside of three months the Hilldale band gave a concert at the little church and the audience nearly stamped the paint off the floor in its enthusiasm for what



the boys had accomplished. Twelve weeks before hardly one of them had been able to tell a musical note from a fly speck.

After their *début* in the church this band began to serenade about the community. Sometimes they serenaded village homes, but more often the homes of the wealthy. The Captain of Industry might be resting from his day's labors on his veranda or he might be chatting with guests or in the midst of an important conference with other Captains of Industry in his study, when suddenly the crunch, crunch, crunch of marching feet on his gravel road would break in upon his meditations or his conference, and a few seconds later the rafters of his house would be ringing with the strains of "Tipperary" or "My Country 'Tis of Thee." Not once did one of these wealthy neighbors close his doors or send out word that he was not at home or was busy. Every time they welcomed the boys and invited them into their drawing rooms. In they would tramp, fifteen or twenty strong, and followed by

twenty-five or thirty hangers-on among the younger boys. Hostesses who would have received royalty without blinking an eye nearly had nervous prostration in trying to accord this band a proper reception. Cooks tore their hair trying to prepare, in twenty minutes, light refreshments for two score husky young fellows. The Captain of Industry himself made a speech of welcome which taxed his brain more than an after dinner speech at the Waldorf. And the band played on and on until the pictures shook upon the walls and the vases trembled upon the mantel. If refreshments did not come before the band had completed its program the program was repeated. Then the band played "Home Sweet Home" and marched down the gravel road again, while the perspiring Captain of Industry and his nerve-racked wife waved farewell from their veranda, and the cook prepared her "notice" in the kitchen.

So it was that Neighbor Freeman's barn became not only a recreation center for this

village but reached out into the homes of rich and poor alike and touched them with a finger of friendship. As of old, when at the sound of Joshua's horn the walls of Jericho began to crumble, so now the barriers between rich and poor were shaken by the brass band that was born and reared in this old barn. The wealthy neighbors were touched by the hearty spirit of the boys and the boys in turn were stirred by the warmth of the welcome they received in the wealthy homes.

The membership in the Recreation Department was no longer fifty-three. It was now one hundred and forty-eight.

## CHAPTER III

### REDEEMING THE CHURCH

PUTTING the fear of God in a community was certainly a religious task, and one had a right to look to the church to take the lead in it. The business of the church is the salvation of the community—salvation not from hell fire in a world to come, but salvation from *uselessness, from low ideals, and from selfishness*. Somehow it must save the human energy of the community from going to waste. It must conserve in the minds and hearts of the people the things that are most worth while—that are true and beautiful and good. It must save its men and women and its boys and girls from wasting their substance in self-indulgence and from burning up their spirits in suspicion and hatred and passion. In order to fulfil this mission the average country church in America must first

convert the neighborhood around it. It must get a new spirit into that neighborhood. To put in the place of narrowness a spirit of pride in the neighborhood, to put friendliness and co-operation in the place of suspicion and independence, to get newcomers and old timers alike to look upon the community as *their own, belonging to them both*, and as a place where it is good to live—this is to convert the neighborhood. Not until a community has this atmosphere can the church, as an institution, do its best work in developing Christian character and usefulness in individuals.

But when we turn from the theory, and examine the “insides” of the average little country church we find discouraging problems awaiting us. In this little church to which I had come as pastor there were twenty-two members, of whom only fifteen still lived in the community. The church had been organized about fifty years before, by a split from the Methodist Church only a stone’s throw away. Before the Metho-

dist congregation split, a new cabinet organ had been purchased. The Dutch Reformers having contributed toward this cabinet organ thought that it ought to split with them. So they had carried it, under the cover of darkness, into the new Reformed Church. The Methodists, however, believed that the organ could make better music before the Almighty if it played only out of Methodist hymn books. So a party of bold Methodists took it through the window one night back into their own church. A larger party of Reformers backed up their faith with works and reclaimed the organ a few nights later. Every little while the organ was given an airing between the two churches, usually on a moonless night. The matter finally ended in the courts and the body of the organ was given to the Reformers. But its soul had long since departed, having been unable to stand the conflicting strains to which it was subjected.

Then, too, there had been village choirs with the usual village feeling about them.

There was a tradition to the effect that at one time a sonorous bass had graced the choir until a fateful Easter Sunday when he came to grief. According to the tradition he had been singing a solo part in an Easter anthem. In the effort to make audible a very low note his Adam's apple had suddenly shot around under one ear, and the whole choir had to adjourn to the outside of the church to work it back into place before the anthem could proceed. This incident was not treated as sympathetically as it should have been by the congregation and some ill feeling developed.

Memories and traditions of this sort covered the little church as the waters cover the sea. Moreover, its old members had been selling their farms and moving away, and its membership was dwindling year by year. Moral and spiritual as well as economic conditions in the community were changing rapidly, but the little church went steadily on with an unchanged program. And its program was simply a weekly meet-

ing and a weekly Sunday School, the same program that it offered fifty years before when conditions and needs were altogether different. For more than twelve years it had not had a resident pastor. A pulpit "supply," who was an excellent preacher, had come out from the city on Sundays. He had preached a good sermon and returned to the city on the same day. The great majority of Protestants had forgotten the habit of going to church. If one had asked a member what the church was for it is doubtful if he would have been answered in terms of community service. The church was simply looked upon as a place for weddings, funerals, and preaching services, and it is more than likely that some would have regarded it as the pious plaything of a village clique.

Could a little church in such condition and with such a history be redeemed for usefulness in the community? Could new life be put into it so that it would take its leadership in working out the salvation of this



country district? Could this little church bind together in sympathy and co-operation both old timers and newcomers and all the divergent elements in the population, no matter how widely separated they might be in blood, customs, and wealth? Could it make itself a melting-pot of social differences? Could it overcome the barriers between men—the barriers that made them forget that they were brothers? Could so small a church take upon itself the most important task in the community, that of bringing spiritual order out of the spiritual muddle? Could it save the community from uselessness, low ideals, and self indulgence? It seemed worth trying.

The thing that needed to be done first seemed to be to define our purpose in the church and to map out a program for the church's service to the community. Then the church must lose itself in its service to the community and trust the Lord for its own existence. If we were ever to have a live church it seemed to us it would be be-

cause we had a live community. The church's first task was to forget itself in the redemption of the community. We would put to a practical test the doctrine, "He that loseth his life for my sake shall find it."

We took as our purpose the resolution *To Make This Community the Cleanest, Happiest, and Most Democratic Community in the State.* Some of us wanted to say "*in the World*" instead of "*in the State.*" Others thought it would be more sensible to say "*in the Township.*" So we compromised on "*in the State.*"

It seemed essential to put our church membership on a basis of purpose rather than creed. If we were to try to unite men and women of various creeds and denominational traditions we had no right to ask them to sacrifice their individual opinions on theological matters. We all wanted to work for the same end, and surely we ought to be able to frame a statement of purpose which would bind us all in a working organization, no matter how much we differed in theology.

So we framed and adopted, by a unanimous vote of the Consistory, the following statement of purpose, which would be accepted as the basis of membership for the church:

## PURPOSE

I BELIEVE THAT TRUE RELIGION IS A MATTER OF PURPOSE.

I BELIEVE THAT THE PURPOSE OF JESUS WAS TO BRING IN WHAT HE CALLED THE KINGDOM OF GOD, THE TIME WHEN ALL MEN SHALL LIVE TOGETHER AS BROTHERS IN JUSTICE, RIGHTEOUSNESS, LOVE, AND UNSELFISH SERVICE.

I BELIEVE THAT THE OBJECT OF THE CHRISTIAN CHURCH IN GENERAL IS TO FURTHER THIS PURPOSE IN THE WORLD AND THE OBJECT OF THE REFORMED CHURCH OF HILLDALE IS TO FURTHER THIS PURPOSE IN THIS COMMUNITY AND THIS STATE IN EVERY POSSIBLE WAY.

CLAIMING THIS PURPOSE AS MY OWN, I WANT TO JOIN THE ORGANIZATION THAT IN THE AGES PAST HAS FOUGHT, AND IS STILL FIGHTING, FOR THIS END.

This statement was printed on a card with a space at the bottom for signature.

We agreed further to receive into our organization as Associate Members those who were already affiliated with other churches, no matter of what denomination, but who, living here several months of the year and being of common purpose with us, desired to have some sort of organic connection with our work.

I have said that this statement of purpose was adopted by a unanimous vote of the Consistory, but let not the gentle reader think that the vote was made unanimous without a struggle. The Consistory met in my little office near the railroad station on a stormy afternoon in late fall. Besides Deacon Bostick and Deacon Gordon there were Elders Hatfield and Nichols. Elder Hatfield was an old gentleman, of about seventy-five years, with a long gray beard and eyes that over-flowed. He was a pious old man. He could barely read and write, but he owned a number of small properties

not in the best of condition, the rental from which, along with the savings of a lifetime, made him fairly comfortable.

Elder Nichols I should have told you about sooner. By his own admission he was the most powerful man in the church. In fact, when I first talked with him he assured me that when I was talking with him I was talking *with the church*. "I am the church," he said in Louis XIV style. And it must be said that he was about right. For Elder Nichols' word was usually accepted as law in the church. He was treasurer, clerk, and President of the Consistory, as well as the church's representative at all conventions.

In his younger days he had conducted a pool room and soda fountain. Later he and his good wife had run a boarding house for summer boarders. He was now about seventy-two years old, had quite a little property, and was retired from active business. He was a great fisherman. In spite of his dictatorial ways there was a certain lovable-

ness about him. He had taken me three or four times on fishing trips and although he caught twenty fish to my one, I enjoyed the trips hugely and came to have a genuine affection for the old man. It was rather difficult to steer clear of theological discussion with him, for he regarded himself as a defender of the faith.

Inasmuch as I boarded with the old man I was kept on the alert to find subjects to talk about that would not involve us in theological discussion. Often his wife came to my rescue and the motherly soul took me under her wing and I believe would have scratched his eyes out had he ever said an evil word to me or against me. I was at a loss to understand old lady Nichols' maternal solicitude for me, and when I asked her the cause of it one day she told me that she liked me because I was not "Goddy." Uncle Josiah was decidedly "Goddy."

At the Consistory meeting it was Uncle Josiah who raised objection to the statement of purpose. His objection was that it

did not include enough. He was strong for including sections concerning the virgin birth of Christ, parts of the Heidelberg catechism, and certain doctrines reputed to have originated in Calvin.

"But Elder," I protested, "we want to establish a strong church that shall do a big work in the community. Isn't it enough that we should ask these people to accept the purpose of Jesus and work with us for the fulfillment of that purpose?"

"They must be right in the doctrine too," he returned.

"What doctrine?" I demanded.

"The doctrines of the Reformed Church," he answered.

"Isn't it enough that they be Christians?"

"No," said Elder Nichols, "they must be Dutch Reformers." Here the argument stood. We pounded the desk, raised our voices, and got red in the face. But we were unable to convince each other. Finally Elder Nichols became accusative.

"You are trying to make this church pop-

ular," accused Elder Nichols. I admitted it. "You are trying to get everybody to come to church," he continued. I admitted that also. "You send out post cards and advertisements of the church's services." It could not be denied. "We have a bell on that church that can be heard three miles; that is advertisement enough. The church is not for everybody. It is for the elect. We who have been working in that church for thirty-seven years don't intend to be shoved aside by newcomers. We are not going to depart from the faith just to get a few more people into the church. The policy of this church and the basis for its membership have been established for hundreds of years and you cannot come along now and change them in a few weeks."

"That may be true, Elder," I replied, "but this is also true, that the policy which met the needs of a day that is past may not meet the needs of men and women of our day. You have pursued that policy for a long time, and as a result the church has



been going down hill until there is but a handful left within it. I have come here to build up this church if I possibly can with God's help and the help of you men. I see that it is probably impossible for us to agree on certain doctrinal points. That is only natural. But if I am to build up the church I must do it by my own methods, and I must have a free hand. I must also have your co-operation. The methods which have been pursued in the past were the methods that met the needs of an older day. They do not meet the needs of the people now. The methods which I am proposing that we try are designed to meet the needs of this day. Are you willing to give them a fair trial, to give me a free hand in working them out and to stand by me until they have had a fair trial?"

Deacon Gordon came to the rescue. "The Dominie is right," he said. "This statement of purpose may not contain all the faith, but surely it contains enough for a foundation, and the foundation is broad enough for any

denomination. Let's make the adventure. Give him and his ideas a trial. There is nothing to lose and everything to gain."

Elder Nichols considered. At last as he buttoned up his coat, he said: "All right, but I am afraid you will get a lot of people into the church who are not of the elect."

Since this was precisely what we wanted there was no need for further argument. Thus it was that the vote was made unanimous.

A few weeks later we worked out a practical program for community service and at our New Year's Day service we presented the program in the form of New Year's resolutions. They were printed on a large card.

## RESOLVED

TO CO-OPERATE WITH MY NEIGHBORS THIS  
YEAR TO THE FOLLOWING ENDS:

TO CONSTRUCT A LARGE BUILDING FOR SUCH  
COMMUNITY PURPOSES AS PUBLIC RECRE-  
ATION, LIBRARY, CONCERTS, LECTURE  
COURSES, GYMNASIUM, CLUB ROOMS, AND  
FIRE DEPARTMENT.

TO PROPERLY MAINTAIN OUR ROADS.

TO BRING PRODUCERS AND CONSUMERS IN THIS  
VICINITY CLOSER TOGETHER IN SOME SORT OF  
CO-OPERATIVE ENTERPRISE.

TO SECURE CHEAPER LIGHTS.

TO IMPROVE THE APPEARANCE OF THE NEIGH-  
BORHOOD BY PROPER DISPOSAL OF RUBBISH,  
BY THE CONSTRUCTION OF SIDEWALKS, BY  
PLANTING, AND BY BEAUTIFYING ALL PROP-  
ERTIES IN WHICH I HAVE ANY INTEREST.

TO AID THE SCHOOL BOARD AND THE PUBLIC  
SCHOOL TEACHERS IN EVERY PROGRESSIVE  
EFFORT.

TO STICK TO THESE UNDERTAKINGS UNTIL  
THEY ARE ACCOMPLISHED, GIVING OF MY  
TIME AND MONEY AS I AM ABLE, AND DOING  
ALL FOR THE PUBLIC GOOD.

We made a religious ceremony of signing these resolutions during the service. One man, as he signed it, said: "This isn't a set of resolutions, this is a note!" which was true. These cards were then taken home and there was hardly a place of business in town which did not display conspicuously its set of resolutions signed by the firm's name or by the proprietor.

Now, with a clear-cut practical purpose, with a scientific as well as a religious basis for membership, and with a specific and definite program to work upon, I felt the time had come to make a canvass for church members.

I began the campaign. I met with the most touching tributes of friendship, but everybody seemed to shy from becoming connected with the church. The old prejudices and grudges were strong. The only memories some seemed to have of the church were memories of quarrels. Others, conscious of strong tendencies to backslide, hesitated to make public declaration of their Christian

purpose. Still others confessed that they had long since got out of the habit of going to church, and while they would attend occasionally they point blank refused to become members and take upon themselves any responsibility for the church's work or success. But the great majority of those who refused gave a reason which surprised me and set me thinking: "I am not good enough." That was the refrain that old people and young seemed to have learned by heart so that they could give it as an answer to any question and to any plea.

In a way it was hopeful, for it signified that no matter what the condition of the local church had become, it still stood in the minds of the people as an institution which demanded righteousness of its members. The old quarrels, the disputes, the factional fights, had not been able to put down that feeling.

Nevertheless, the Christian church is not for saints only. Its Master long since declared that He came into the world to seek

and to save that which was lost. There ought to be room in the church for every sinner who wanted to be released from his sins or at least forget them long enough to work with his fellows in the service of his community. And there was much good work in this community which men could do even if they were not saints.

Two ways to overcome this difficulty presented themselves. One was to hold a series of revival services, securing the help of some evangelist, trained in the art of making people publicly renounce their sins. Such a man could doubtless be found and would come to the little church for a week or two and, with the aid of much advertisement and much playing upon heart strings and the emotions of men, bring sufficient pressure to bear upon them to make some of them come to the altar to renounce their sins and to seek a new lease of spiritual life.

The other way that presented itself was more novel and seemed more adapted to the needs of the local situation. So I adopted

it. I planned a Sinners' Service one Sunday in the church. For that service post cards were mailed to every family in the community. The cards read like this:

**FOR SINNERS ONLY**

*The services at the Reformed Church next Sunday will be for sinners only. Saints and righteous people are requested to please stay away.*

For once we had a church well filled. None could stay away without setting himself up as a saint. No doubt many came also out of curiosity. Anyway they came, and that is what we wanted. To be sure there were a few whose sense of humor had been somewhat impaired by stomach trouble or atrophied by long disuse, who by personal protest on the street or by note or letter expressed their anger at having been picked out to be the recipients of such a post card.

But if one hesitates to try an experiment because everybody does not have a sense of humor, one may as well give up the ghost without further effort in this vale of tears. The program for this service was very much like that of the regular Sunday service. When it came to the sermon I began something like this:

“In speaking to the sinners of this neighborhood this morning I am speaking to my comrades in the local chapter of the greatest fraternity in the world. The local chapter seems to be large and flourishing and from all outward appearance prosperous, happy, and rather good looking. The fraternity to which we belong is the greatest on earth because it is the largest in numbers, widest in extent, oldest in tradition, wealthiest, most respectable, and at the same time the most democratic in membership. It numbers countless millions, it stretches from pole to pole, and around the globe at every latitude. It dates back far beyond the beginning of history. Put the wealth of this



fraternity of sinners beside the wealth of the fraternity of saints and the latter looks like a grain of sand on a shore that has no bounds. As for respectability, the most respectable people of every generation have belonged with us—kings and princes, blue bloods and peers of every race and every age. And as for democracy, the only line drawn among us seems to be the line of sex, the consensus of opinion being that we are prevailingly masculine. But with this exception we are utterly democratic. There is no one so poor that he cannot belong to us and none so rich that he can buy his way out from among us if he would.”

I went on to say that the attitude of the church toward sinners was changing. Instead of taking sinners by the throat and shaking them over hell fire, she was taking them by the hand and leading them into some form of human service. It was not because sin had become less hideous, but simply that the church had found out that the cure of sin was not the fear of hell but the forgetting

of self. The average sinner does not need the church to take him by the throat and tell him that sin is hideous, that its wage is death. We have all found that out by experience. No one can frighten us with tales of torment hereafter. Sin carries its own hell with it. We have found it the most expensive pleasure we ever had. There was scarcely a pillow in town that had not buried the wasted tears of some one's remorse. There was not a heart from which had not arisen the prayer, "Lord be merciful to me, a fool!"

Then I proposed that we try to forget our own sins and to forgive the sins of our neighbors and work together in the service of our community. Two tasks needed to be done. They might seem mundane, but were in reality of tremendous importance to the happiness of this village. The first of these tasks was to secure sidewalks for the protection of children on their way to school. The increasing number of automobiles made the safety of the children along the roads more and more precarious. The second task

was to secure a Neighborhood Building to house the recreations of the neighborhood. Freeman's barn was only temporary. I dwelt upon the need of this house and closed with an appeal to the effect that here were two tasks for the community, in the accomplishment of which even unregenerate sinners might make themselves useful.

When at the conclusion of the sermon I asked for a quiet raising of hands by those who would co-operate in accomplishing these two tasks, every one raised a hand. A few days later I again began the rounds in the quest of new members. I presented the purpose card to every man in the community whom I thought ought to be ready to sign it. I dared them to sign it. Finally it was Tom Saunders, a mason, who reached for the card one day in the presence of his family and said: "Here, by heaven, I will be the first to sign." The rest of his family followed his example, and in a few days thirty new names were added to the church roll. Then one day one of the young fellows of

the community asked if we would reserve two pews for some rather bashful fellows who had not had much experience in church going. The pews were reserved, and on the following Sunday they were filled and on the next Sunday two more pews were occupied by these young men.

About this time, too, or possibly a little before, Reverend Richard A. Blackford, pastor of the Methodist Church, closed its doors and asked its people to attend service in our church. He had another church at Centerville, a few miles away, and lived there. He was a broad-minded man and knew that there was no excuse for two Protestant churches side by side, trying to serve the same small community, especially now that one of the churches had a resident minister. In closing the doors of his church he set an example for Protestant ministers everywhere, one of the finest examples in the history of the country church in America. It meant a sacrifice to him because he had to disobey his Conference, which did not understand the

local situation and he had to sacrifice that portion of his salary which was coming from the church he closed.

About this time also a few old timers of unquestioned piety left our church. To them it had ceased to be a home for God's elect.

It would make a happier story if the record of the church could end here. Enthusiasm was at its height. But we had yet to weather the storms by which all earthly institutions are tried. We had yet to find out whether this church or any church, conceived with the high purpose of unselfish service and binding its members together on the broad basis of Christian purpose, could stand the test of time in a rural American community.

## CHAPTER IV

### SOME OBSTACLES

AND now I began to understand the "fear of man" against which Gordon had warned me. Between the town as it was and the town as it ought to be there were many obstacles, most of them possessed of two legs. For the sake of convenience these obstacles may be divided into three classes: first, those having to do with evil social and economic environment; second, those having to do with degenerate blood; and third, the forms of human cussedness not included under one and two.

No one who has tried to deal directly and first hand with social problems would think of treating either of these classes impersonally, that is, like blind, mechanical forces. Behind the evil, social and economic environment we find men and women who

make a living out of it and resist any change as a dog resists having his bone taken from him. Behind the bad effects of degenerate blood we find human beings producing that blood and preserving it through numerous offspring.

The seven saloons which kept our little village thirsty have already been mentioned. For two hundred years and more the liquor traffic had flourished in this community and it was deeply rooted. It was accepted by many respectable citizens as a necessary factor in community life. One heard on every hand that the saloons had justified their existence, first, because they paid large sums into the public treasury, and second, because they were poor men's clubs. Doubtless the first of these arguments was designed to appeal to business men, the second to the sentimentalists. Both of them I soon found to be spurious and hypocritical.

These seven saloons were paying into the public treasury about \$7,000.00 a year, but they were taking out of the public pocketbook

in return for alcoholic beverages at least \$50,000.00 a year. But they were taking more than money. By the testimony of doctor, nurse, employer, and school teacher, they were taking away human efficiency, lessening powers of resistance to sickness, weakening wills, and breeding paupers and criminals. I soon found myself asking the same questions that confront every patriotic citizen who thinks upon this question. "Does it pay to license a traffic which makes men less skilful, less steady, less reliable; which lessens endurance, lessens self-respect and the respect of others, lessens confidence, lessens credit, lessens the demand for food, clothing, shelter, and tools with which to work? Does it pay to license a traffic which breeds idiots, paupers, criminals, lunatics, and epileptics, and casts them upon society to be supported by decent, honest, industrious people? Does it pay to license a traffic which increases taxes by creating a necessity for jails, penitentiaries, asylums, hospitals, almshouses, orphanages, reformatories, police and criminal



courts? Does it pay to license a thing which is always and everywhere known to be the enemy of everything sacred to God and man?" I came to the conclusion that it did not pay.

As for the saloon keeper's argument that he was the poor man's friend, I might have gone on believing this as I did while pursuing academic studies under sentimental professors, had I not had to come in contact now with those who had been "befriended." I had not been in the community long until I was called to homes where destitution was reported. Almost without exception the destitution was the result of drunkenness. Within a mile of where I sit now as I write there are three mothers and thirteen children in dire want and dependent partly upon charity because of the drunkenness of husbands and fathers. They are heroic little mothers and proud. They are fighting, as I have seen few men fight, to maintain their self-respect, to clothe their children, and to keep the wolf from the

door. They are not old women, but the bright happiness that was theirs when they married has faded into the gray twilight of poverty and unremitting toil and struggle almost hopeless. If the dreams of their youth are ever fulfilled it will only be in their children, and the saloon is waiting for these.

Perhaps these are extreme cases. But in this little village there are literally scores of homes where money needed for household expenses goes to the "poor man's friend," who gives back nothing but the ashes of manhood and will power and character. Within the past week I have buried one man prematurely old, of a good family and a promising boyhood—who for the last ten years has been lost to usefulness and honor, even among those who loved him. He has been only a sot. One morning last week he was found dead in an old shack owned by a "poor man's friend," and erected to care for his "drunks." At the funeral only a brother and sister stood weeping at the grave. There was no

one else to mourn him. The "poor man's friend" had finished with him. The pallbearers who lowered his coffin into the grave were paid for their services. Within the same week I have sent coal to two families where drunkenness caused poverty; loaned money for household supplies to a man who is trying to get on his feet after being a drunkard for years; and received the following paragraphs in a letter from a millionaire in a neighboring village:

"Frankly, I am one of the type who in the early days rebelled against prohibition, feeling that it interfered with my personal rights and privileges. This, of course, was a very narrow view to take of so important a question, but I never had given it consideration until talking with people and of people who could not control their taste for liquor and particularly after the community work, with which I by accident became identified, thus obtaining a greater knowledge of the traffic and the burden it imposed upon the poorer classes, which resulted in a complete change in my mental view of this subject, that can be termed, under our present so-called civilization, nothing less than a blight on mankind.

"The thing that has perhaps impressed me most seriously recently arose from the work of Mr. Judd in

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providing a Christmas for the children of our district who would otherwise have gone without any Christmas celebration. Two weeks before Christmas, on Sunday, Mr. Judd visited some thirty families, in twenty of which it was admitted the children would have no Christmas celebration or presents of any kind, and in each instance the head of the family was manifestly under the influence of liquor."

And this has been only an average week.

Facts like these soon began to hit me in the face at every turn. It did not take long to lose whatever sentimental consideration I had for the "poor man's friend." Naturally enough I soon found the saloons opposing the work of the church, of the Recreation Department and the Neighborhood Association generally. Their opposition was not straightforward but subtle and underhanded. Each saloon seemed to be a little center of discontent where opposition was fomented. From these centers went out the insidious charge that the church and Neighborhood Association were simply a scheme whereby the rich were trying to control the poor, in order to make the village a nice, quiet place in which

to live. It began to be said in these centers also that I was simply the "stool pigeon" of the rich, reporting the misdeeds of the poor and catering to the every wish of wealthy parishioners. No man was ever bold enough to say any of these things to my face. But they were constantly reported to me as gossip. Often my blood boiled and my fingers itched to meet the liars face to face, but they all seemed to be "yellow," and I have never yet had the opportunity of putting my fist in their faces. At least once a saloon keeper sent liquor to a dance in our club room with the evident intention of damaging the club's reputation and usefulness.

Somehow we must put a stop to this business. The first big thing to do was to protect the community from the traffic and to save the coming generation from falling its victims. Daily the community was being drained of its manhood and its producing power. The saloons were openly defying the law, selling on Sunday, selling to minors, and

permitting, or even encouraging, gambling. A few weeks after I came to town, two boys, under eighteen, were found dead drunk along the roadside. A little later a friend had bought for his son, a boy of about nineteen, a suit of clothes on Saturday and had paid him his weekly wage for helping in his father's shop. That night the boy went into the nearest saloon and when he staggered from it on Sunday morning, his money was gone, his suit ruined. He was sick in body and his parents were sick in soul. The traffic in this sort of thing must be rooted out. We would get up a wet and dry campaign and vote the saloons out of town. We might get licked the first time, but the campaign would have an educational effect, would make the saloons obey the law, and when we tried it again we would have a good chance of winning.

Right here, however, we struck a snag. It was not possible to hold a wet and dry campaign in our village, not even if we incorporated. The citizens of our great state were

not enfranchised on the liquor question. There was no law on the statute books permitting us to vote aye, yes, or no on the saloons. Every state in the Union but three had passed advance temperance legislation during the last ten years—and ours was one of the three.

Our only hope was to aid in such ways as we could the Anti-Saloon League in securing the proper laws (a work of years considering the character of the state legislature) and to keep the traffic in check by an aroused public sentiment. This was only a makeshift, but it was all we could do. When I found this out I felt as an engineer, who wanted to drain a swamp and turn it into productive land, would feel to find that all he could do was to oil the swamp to keep its evil effects at a minimum.

So deep-rooted was the traffic, however, that even this mild program met with much opposition from the saloon element and little support even on the part of decent citizens who could be expected to be desirous of a

clean community. It is with shame that I have to record that some of the members of my church Consistory objected to my fighting the saloons or speaking against the traffic. One deacon, a merchant, who first stood with me, suffered the loss of patronage of one of the saloon keepers and then tried to square himself with the saloon keeper and get back his trade!

But the saloons were not the only evil force in our community. I had scarcely been in the community three months when it was reported that a disorderly house was being conducted in an old shack near the railroad station. Investigation proved the truth of this report. An old man, a drunkard and one who had, apparently, not shaved or washed for many years, was, with the help of his wife, running a house of prostitution, with their own daughters as inmates. The place was patronized only by the lowest class of colored men and foreigners and by a few old bums. But it was a festering sore. Twice we had it raided and both times



the old man was sentenced to six months in the workhouse and his daughters, large, feeble-minded girls, sent to a detention home in the city. After the second jail sentence the old man decided that his personal liberties were being interfered with, that the town wasn't what it used to be, and moved away. One good deed he accomplished, however, before he left. He passed a bogus check for \$7.00 on one of our saloon keepers. For this act the justice of the peace confided to me that he wanted to pin a medal on the old rascal.

Another obstacle of a far different character than saloons or disorderly house, but no less difficult to overcome, was the shifting nature of our population. A careful social survey revealed these facts in this connection: that one-half the total population had lived here less than ten years and nearly one-third had lived here less than five years. Nearly one-half of the population were renters employed in various capacities on large estates. The average length of resi-

dence in the community for many of these was but two or three years. Families of this sort seemed to feel that they were strangers, and not knowing how long they would be in the community, they did not want to "break the ice" and form new associations. This attitude of mind probably explained why they were unable to hold a position for more than two or three years. Then there were the old timers, who still held their land and were holding it for high and yet higher prices. These felt that they would sell soon and move away and their interest in community affairs was at low ebb. Many of their farmer neighbors had already sold and gone, and it was only natural that these who were left should feel that their day was passed. Underneath all this lay the fact that the community was no longer a productive community. We produced nothing for which the outside world cared to change its wealth. The chief sources of income were the estate owners who made their money in the city. It is as bad for a community to be unproductive as it is for an

individual; for both it means a loss of self-respect.

To solve the problem of the unproductiveness of the community and its shifting population requires more brains than have yet been brought to bear upon the task. Experts from the State University and the agricultural department failed to make any progress in encouraging the use of idle land for poultry raising or truck gardening. "What's the use? We're making a living now," was the usual reply to such stimuli. That was true. Almost everybody was making a living, but we all could have been making a better living. Another reply from a simple-hearted woman expressed the feeling of many. "My husband can't do garden work—he perspires so!"

But Neighbor Freeman's barn was destined to make a contribution to the economic life of the community as well as to its recreations—to ring with blows of hammers and hum with buzz of saws. Yes, and to be baptised in perspiration.

## CHAPTER V

### MORE OBSTACLES

SOME one has defined Eugenics as the science which enables us to blame our faults upon our ancestors. If this definition is correct the study is very much needed in the average rural American village. The effects of frequent inter-marriage among old families until practically every one is related, are far from wholesome. Professor Arnold Gesell, reporting the results of a eugenic survey of "A Village of a Thousand Souls,"\* says that his observations of the people of that particular village covered a period of thirty-three years. In his report he shows in a striking way how the sins of the fathers have been visited upon the children of the third and fourth generations. He draws a map showing the two hundred and twenty homes.

\* See American Magazine, October, 1913.

Out of two hundred and twenty houses, thirty-seven have been given the stamp of feeble-mindedness. That is, there were adult persons in those homes whose intelligence was less than that of a normal thirteen year old child. He says, "there is the grinning simpleton whom everybody jokes, the queer old woman who plays with a big rag doll, the child who has never learned to walk, the overgrown girl in school whom the other little children tease and who scratches and spits back, the man who plays an accordion, but cannot do much of anything else, the gray-haired woman who always wanders about the streets." The map shows thirty-six houses that bear the stamp of alcoholism and nearly every alcoholic was a father from whose loins children had sprung. Counting three cases of epilepsy, twenty-two of the homes bear the stamp of insanity. Not all of the insanity was permanent, but it was there, hiding in the family closets, skeletons ready to jump out and rattle their bones whenever the storms of worry and want blew

open the doors. Fourteen homes are stamped with tuberculosis. There they stand today—two hundred and twenty homes in a prosperous village, one hundred and nine of them bearing the curse of either feeble-mindedness, alcoholism, insanity, or tuberculosis. Is it any wonder that there are dull, anæmic children in the public school? That weak-mindedness, shiftlessness, and laziness seem bred in the bones of some of them?

I do not know that Professor Gesell's village was an average village, but I am inclined to believe that his proportion would about hold true for the old American communities that have suffered too much intermarriage and two hundred years of liquor traffic. That does not mean that the entire membership of the families had become degenerate. There were many, many homes where no excess had shattered the nerves and no disease tainted the blood, and out of these homes were coming young men and women, clear-eyed and vigorous, the mechanics, business men, doctors, lawyers, and ministers of

tomorrow. And often in the homes that seemed most hopeless there was one child with normal faculties of body and mind fighting his way upward heroically against the fate that had all but foreordained him to be damned.

Closely related to the obstacles due to the effects of degenerate blood are those which are due to pure cussedness. Under this head should be included the outcroppings of ignorance and stupidity, of clannishness, petty jealousies, and cliques. But they can be illustrated more easily than they can be defined or their causes diagnosed.

One of the ugliest spots in the community was the local cemetery. The plot owners were not organized and the cemetery was not incorporated. The first step to beautify the place so that it would be worthy of the dead who lay buried there seemed to be to incorporate it and get a head to it. A sexton could then be employed and be held responsible for keeping the entire property in good order. After considerable work in finding

the names and addresses of the plot owners (for they were scattered to the four winds of heaven) a meeting was finally called to discuss incorporation. At this meeting Jake Bush, a patriarchal looking old fellow, arose and said: "I don't know what incorporation is, but I'm agin it." Another old gentleman from the brush volunteered the opinion that there were too many grasping corporations already in the world. A third insisted that this was another scheme by which the rich were trying to grab the cemetery. We had to adjourn that first meeting without a vote because of such stupid attitudes.

Then there was the affair of the pump handle—an affair which nearly split our church. We had put in a new cistern in order to furnish water and fire protection for the church. When it was completed, Deacon Bostick raised the question in Consistory meeting whether or not the pump handle should be kept in the church or on the pump during the week. Upon being questioned, it developed that Deacon Bostick was very in-



sistent upon having the pump handle left inside the church during the week, so that it could not be used by old Lige Tompkins, who cared for a few of the graves in the cemetery. Lige was a brother-in-law of the Deacon and eternal enmity was sworn between them. Up to the time the cistern was put in at the church, Lige had to carry water for the cemetery flowers from a neighboring house about two hundred yards away. The church cistern would have been much more convenient for him. For that reason, the good Deacon Bostick was opposed to allowing the pump handle to remain on the pump during the week. The Deacon made such a fuss about this that he actually persuaded a few to stand with him. But we finally settled the matter in favor of leaving the pump handle on the pump for the use of any and all who wanted it.

Human cussedness was not monopolized by the poor. The rich in our community were very human, and had their share of human vices as well as virtues. There were wealthy

families who would not speak to each other. Others had their troubles with intemperate sons. Still others were not big enough to overcome the tendency, which wealth carries with it, to make men independent of their fellows, of their community, and of God. There were not a few who regarded church and community work as needed only by the poor. If this variety of wealth came to church at all, it was only to see how the thing was getting along. Perhaps the parson was not filling the church; if so, would it not be better to fire him and get a new one? The thought that they might need spiritual cleansing and inspiration never entered their heads. Neither did they imagine that they might learn something spiritually worth while from the ordinary carpenter or washerwoman or even from the sermon, no matter how poor it was. People of this sort were a constant thorn in the flesh to those of us who were genuinely interested in making our community more of a human brotherhood. Accustomed to speak with authority along the

lines of their own business, they were unable to see that they were not fitted by training or experience to speak with authority upon social work, any more than they would have been upon surgical or biological work. But if such men were hard upon us they were worse upon themselves. For they shut themselves out from human sympathy.

The affair of the two chairs in the rear of the church also deserves a place in this chapter. Some time during that first winter, Ludwig Jackson, a local grocer and barber, had been elected Sunday School Superintendent. He was an energetic little man and immediately began to look around the church to see what he could improve. In the rear of the auditorium he saw two old chairs which did not add beauty to the room. So he promptly picked up the chairs and started to carry them to the little balcony which crossed the rear of the church. It was on a Sunday morning, just as the congregation had begun to assemble for the weekly preaching service. As Jackson passed the door

with his chairs, into the church, from the vestibule, stepped Deacon Bostick and Mr. Grossman. Deacon Bostick promptly demanded that the chairs be replaced.

“Why so?” said Jackson.

“You can’t get me out of the church this way,” replied the Deacon.

“I don’t want to get you out of the church,” said Jackson.

“Then take my chairs back.”

“But why? You are no better than the rest of us. You can sit in the pews just like anybody else.”

Deacon Bostick became oratorical.

“For thirty-three years Mr. Grossman and me have set in those two chairs and we ain’t going to let an upstart like you take our rights away from us in this here church!”

Jackson, however, was not convinced and he marched on his way to the gallery with his chairs, whereupon Deacon Bostick and Mr. Grossman marched out of the church—Mr. Grossman never to return.

Deacon Bostick was at that time doing the

janitor work for my little office and when, during the week, he told me of the "outrage," he insisted that it was a plot to get him out of the church. I tried to appease him, but he hugged his sorrow to his bosom and would not be comforted. Finally I asked him to give us one more chance and promised that his chairs would be in their old place for him on the following Sunday. I then spoke to Jackson, explaining how, for sentimental reasons as well as diplomatic, it might be well to leave the old chairs in their original place. Jackson agreed to this and I thought that the matter would be settled.

The next Sunday, however, some musicians had come from the city and needed a couple of chairs in the choir loft. They sent the sexton for the fated chairs in the rear of the church and he was just in the act of taking them down the aisle when Deacon Bostick appeared at the door. With the air of a martyr he gave the chairs a lingering look and turned and left the church.

I cross my heart and hope to die that what

follows is the strict truth and nothing but the truth. After a long session with Deacon Bostick during the following week I finally persuaded him that the second carrying away of the chairs was not another step in the deep laid plot to get him out of the church, but merely a coincidence. I solemnly bet him ten cents that if he would give us only one more trial the chairs would be found in their old corner and would be reserved religiously for him on the next Sunday. He agreed to this and we put up the stakes with my stenographer. I then informed both the sexton and Jackson that the situation was critical, not to say tense, and would they please not molest the chairs any more? They both agreed.

Now we had a children's choir which sang in the little gallery. It was growing in members. Miss Adams, the director, on the following Sunday found that she needed two chairs to seat two of her little choir girls. And as fate would have it, she was toting these two chairs away just as Deacon Bos-

tick appeared. This was too much. With a deep guttural cry, Deacon Bostick turned upon his heel and left the church forever. At the close of the service Deacon Freeman found him walking around and around in a neighboring field talking to himself and making violent gestures. He gave him the consolations of religion and led him home. So deep was his grief, however, that he refused to accept the bet which he had so honestly won.

## CHAPTER VI

# BUILDING THE NEIGHBORHOOD HOUSE

THUS far the reader may have cause to think that our landscape was covered largely with obstacles and the people of our village filled with degenerate blood and human cussedness. That is not true. I have tried to set down the obstacles just as we found them. They are with us yet, blocking our way, impeding our steps, and discouraging us as often as we permit ourselves to think of them. But they are the same obstacles that impede human progress everywhere. And, thank heaven, the good in our community, as in most communities, was stronger than the bad.

Even if these obstacles had constituted an immovable object, there was an irresistible force ready to tackle them. This irresistible



force was in the persons of forward looking citizens of our village—Mr. and Mrs. Townsend (the latter a woman of great power who reminded one variously of Juno, Audubon, and Julius Cæsar), the Stuarts, the Boisens, the Fiskes, the Grants, the Freemans, the Saunderses, the Edwardses, the Richardses, the Jacksons, Dan Cushman, Fred Black, Andy Magruder, and a host of others too numerous to mention.

Some of these were wealthy and some were poor, but they were all what Professor T. N. Carver calls “work bench philosophers” as distinguished from “pig trough philosophers,” producers rather than parasites on the body politic.

And let me say here—and I hope the publishers will print it large—*whatever of constructive social work has been achieved in this village, has been the result of the combined efforts of these workers.* It has been no one man’s work, and certainly not mine. I have not played a Moses’ part. I have been but one of the many who have tried to guide our

common efforts into paths of efficiency and production rather than allow them to fall into decay through neglect. *The record that follows is not one of uplift, but of co-operation.* We come now to the part of our story where we may see these "forward looking" citizens working together.

After a year and a half in Neighbor Freeman's barn we decided the time had come to start the campaign for a Neighborhood House. The result drove all thought of obstacles out of our minds. The village blacksmith started the subscriptions with \$25.00, which was no small amount for a man of his income. When we had completed the campaign we found that one hundred and ten families had subscribed \$31,000.00, the subscriptions varying from \$15.00 to \$2,500.00. About \$1,500.00 of this amount was in voluntary labor which was as good as cash. Nearly every citizen, who was a permanent resident, gave something. The most gave money, some gave labor, and some gave advice.

A great architect, who had built some of

the larger houses in the community, offered his services free of charge in planning the house. For the next four months hardly an evening went by but a small-sized riot was staged in discussing the plans for various parts of the building. When the architect had finally made the twenty-seventh revision we were ready to let the work to a contractor.

Thereupon Mr. Townsend, the President of the Neighborhood Association, suggested that it would be a blessing to be able to build a house without a contractor hanging around. He went on to say that the idea of making the house an expression of all the people could be worked out in the construction of the building if some local man who had had building experience would volunteer his time as manager and the various mechanics would form committees to see that their particular lines of work were properly carried out according to specifications. The carpenters were to form a carpentry committee, the masons a masonry committee, the

plumbers a plumbing committee, etc., etc. Each committee would oversee its particular work and the building would be made a lasting monument for better or worse to the building trades of our town.

This idea was perfect nonsense. The only thing the building committee ever did unanimously was to condemn it. But Mr. Townsend would not shut up. Every time we met he piped up with this socialistic scheme. Finally he became so obnoxious that the committee decided to give his plan serious consideration. Mr. Malcolm, the leading opponent, insisted that while the building could possibly be built in this way it would be much more expensive than to hire a contractor. Mr. Townsend insisted, on the contrary, that the building could be built more cheaply by this co-operative method. This was preposterous. Mr. Malcolm moved that Mr. Townsend be convinced of his own folly by letting him take the responsibility of building the building in his own fool way. He added to his motion a

bet that if the building could be built in a co-operative method more cheaply than a contractor would build it, he, Mr. Malcolm, would give the entire Board of Directors a dinner such as they had never had before—"would fill them up, hollow legs and all." This motion was carried and it was up to Mr. Townsend.

Well, he did it. The various committees were organized. A local manager, Fred Black, a good contractor and a Roman Catholic, volunteered his time and the work was begun. Daniel Cushman had agreed to excavate the cellar as his donation. Thereupon we decided to make a cellar under the whole house, including the front porch. We had our troubles, of course, and only the strong pacifist sentiment in America at that time prevented us from resorting to arms and ammunition when we had disagreements over the size of windows, the color of walls and woodwork, the furniture, the light fixtures, etc.

The building was a God-send to the com-

munity that year. Work was scarce and the families of many carpenters would have been hard pressed, if not actually destitute, had not the building offered an opportunity for labor. Some of the men were glad to donate to the building fund a part of each day's wage as their contribution toward the construction of the Neighborhood House. Others gave five or ten days' labor outright. A few gave two or three weeks and one workman donated over \$100.00 in time. Nothing could have made the walls of our building more firm than this voluntary labor. Every workman seemed to feel that the building was partly his. The sweat of his brow was going into it.

The spirit of the men was warm and friendly. A walking delegate of the labor union could not understand it and was decidedly suspicious. He made two or three visits with the evident intention of stirring up trouble over the voluntary labor plan and on the occasion of his last visit had fortified himself with alcoholic stimulant. But even this

availed him nothing. He was sent about his business with the assurance from the workmen themselves that they were not being oppressed or swindled. The spirit of the men was further evidenced by the fact that nineteen of the younger ones joined the church that winter and spring.

At last the building was finished. When we came to add up our total expenses we found that we had exceeded a contractor's estimate on the building by about \$800.00. We, therefore, stood to lose the dinner which Mr. Malcolm had promised in case we built the building by the co-operative method at a lower cost than the contractor's estimate. To be sure we had made many changes in the building since the plans had been drawn and the price of building materials had risen. Nevertheless we were losers. But now Mr. Malcolm had a word to say. He insisted that the building was much more valuable than it would have been had it been constructed by a contractor. He said that the spirit which the workmen had pounded into

the building was worth much more than the \$800.00 loss in money. He insisted, therefore, on giving the dinner—a dinner that would have filled us up, “hollow legs and all,” even though we had possessed as many legs as a centipede.

On the night of the house warming fully four hundred neighbors, rich and poor, young and old, crowded into the house and inspected it from cellar to garret. In the basement they found a large room for the fire department, another containing two bowling alleys, and smaller ones for fuel, storage, furnace, and lavatories. Few, if any, of the fellows knew how to bowl and as a result balls flew down the alleys like shots from a rapid-firing gun and the pin boys gave illustrations of how jumping-jacks ought to work when in good condition. On the main floor the visitors found a good-sized auditorium, seating about three hundred, a social room adjoining and separated by a movable partition. The auditorium had a dance floor and an excellent form of folding chair which was at once



comfortable, safe, and good looking. In the social room there was a pool table, a substation of the library, and various small games. On this floor, too, was a small office for the Secretary. Across the front of the house was a large veranda, suitable for summer dancing. Through these rooms the neighbors trooped and on up to the second floor, where they inspected a small motion picture booth and the quarters of the Superintendent and his wife.

The inspection over, a program of speeches, music, and movies followed. The audience enjoyed the music, did no violence to the speakers, but awoke to keen enthusiasm when the movies began. Until the pictures were actually upon the screen there had been considerable doubt as to whether our town could have a real, "for sure" motion picture show. Now, however, the fears were dispelled and the audience stamped their feet and applauded loudly at every opportunity. After the movies came the grand march and dancing. For the grand march, Mr. Fiske, a

wealthy corporation lawyer and the acting President of the Association during an absence of Mr. Townsend, offered his arm to Nellie Brown, the daughter of one of the village men. Grandly they stepped it off together and in their wake other rich and poor locked arms and marched around the auditorium, down the stairs, through the fire department, through the bowling alleys, up the stairs, and out on the veranda and back. Then the orchestra struck up a dance and until 2.00 o'clock in the morning we danced and sang and danced again.

It had been an evening such as the village had never seen before. As I walked home that night and looked back at the lights that shone from the auditorium windows and heard the faint strains of the dance music I could not help but thank God for such a Neighborhood House and for the spirit of the men and women who had built it. Could we go on week after week and year after year, Catholics, Methodists, Baptists, Episcopalians, Presbyterians, Jews, meeting there

in friendship, getting better acquainted, playing together, exchanging ideas on politics, religion or what-not, without degenerating into a small clique of one mind and one class? Could we go on working together until cliques disappeared and pride took the place of indifference, and energy the place of listlessness? Could we keep the spirit of sympathetic effort and good-natured service radiating from the Neighborhood House? If we could, there would be no question about the fear of God in our village. Ultimately we would overturn the obstacles. It would not be the work of a year or two, but of a generation or two—but it would be worth while.

## CHAPTER VII

### SOCIALISM OF ANOTHER SORT

BUILDING the Neighborhood House by the co-operative method was to many a concrete example of Socialism. It seemed to some of us that if Socialism did not teach such co-operation, it at least ought to. It occurred to me that a lecture or sermon on Socialism would be interesting and possibly give impulse to more such co-operation. So I sent for Luke Wood, a professional Socialist, asking him to come and speak in our church on a Sunday morning on the subject, "The Religion of a Socialist." This was in the days before Wood had become famous for causing disorder at services where Rockefeller worshiped and for burning the American flag along with the flags of other nations in order to symbolize the fusing of all nationalities and the birth out of their ashes of a

new internationalism. For this bit of symbolism he spent several months in jail.

I had seen Mr. Wood a few times. One of those times was in New York City, when he was being arrested while trying to protect young girl strikers from the brutality of certain of the police. Another time he was going into jail for this offense. A third time he was in a court room making his case a test case and putting up a fight for these girls against the police—a fight which he won. I had seen him also in the little single room in which he lived, and knew that he lived in rigid simplicity that was almost ascetic. He had done everything in his power to identify himself in life and in thought with the great mass of poor people. He had written a book which was the first popular presentation of the life of Jesus from an economic viewpoint.

He came to us dressed in a tweed suit and wearing a white flannel shirt. I speak of this because that shirt played no small part

in his address and the memory which the congregation bore away. His coming had been announced and the church was filled to the doors. Rich and poor were there sitting side by side and singing from the same hymn books. Among the wealthy men, one was the head of a trans-continental railway system. He had worked his way up from the ranks by his ability to think clearly and calmly and his power for organization. Another was a corporation lawyer, who was the son of a congregational minister, and could not, therefore, have been anything but poor in his youth. The third was a commission merchant who had risen from the depths of poverty on New York's lower East Side. A fourth was a banker who had started his business career cleaning out offices in a middle western city at fifty cents a week. There were a few others and, without exception, they had all known poverty and had climbed out of it by the force of brain and energy and character. The village people who made up the rest of the audience were the farmers and the me-

chanics and tradesmen of the town with their wives and families. We had all heard a great deal about Socialism and had come to hear what specific things it stood for and what it wanted of us and promised for us.

As I looked down into the faces of the congregation I thought that I had never seen a group of men and women more ready to receive a constructive message, or more willing to meet each other half way in any movement for better mutual understanding and sympathy.

Wood began by telling us that there were three great outstanding facts in our day: the gasoline engine as the symbol of modern science and industry changing the face of the earth, Biblical criticism shaking the foundations of authority and tradition and giving us for the first time a picture of the life of Jesus from the standpoint of his own times; and thirdly, Socialism, a great self-respect movement of the workers of the world springing out of this rediscovery of Jesus as an

economic leader and aiming at nothing less than the possession of the reins of government and the ownership of the tools of industry.

He showed how the teaching of Jesus, when interpreted in the light of the oppression of Roman tyranny under which the Jews lived, took on a new and mightier meaning. He dwelt at some length on how today Jesus and His teaching have another arch-enemy more subtle and powerful even than Rome and that enemy is the "System." He went on to tell us that this "System" was responsible for most of the wretchedness of our present day; that great fortunes and immense power were being piled up out of the exploited labor of the workers; that the mainspring of the activity of the majority of the business men of today was the getting of money, which has become such a passion that the greater things of the spirit have been forgotten or at least have taken second place. He said that the evil power of this "System" was so great that until recently, at least, a



man with a thousand dollars could go out and hire one thousand men at a dollar a day and be their slave driver for that day. But of late a great self-respect has been fermenting in the hearts of the laboring men, a self-respect, a part of which at least, is inculcated by the teaching of Jesus. This self-respect, he said, is binding them together in a great brotherhood; they are rising in their might and are seeking not only the destruction of the capitalist class, but are aiming also at the ownership and control of the social tools of production, distribution, and exchange, this, if possible, within their own generation. Finally, that it was essentially a class struggle and needed men who would devote their time and their talent to the cause of the proletariat and to the destruction of the "System." He had adopted this cause and the flannel shirt as the symbol thereof. He told us that he had "declassed" himself, wore the flannel shirt on all occasions, and when he had been invited to meet an Earl in the house of a certain New York

hostess, he had gone there wearing the flannel shirt, in spite of her entreaties to wear a less conspicuous garb.

That was all. As he had begun to speak the expression on the faces of the congregation had been one of interest and of something like wistfulness, but as he spoke the interest faded. The wistfulness gave place to disappointment. He presented neither ideal nor method, neither principle nor program; nothing specific, only phrases and generalities and class hatred and a white flannel shirt. Before he had finished, the group that had come together in the unity of hope and neighborly feeling had been divided by the wedge of class consciousness. Anger flamed out in both rich and poor, and disgust both at the speaker and the church was written upon their faces.

Summoning what courage I could I answered him and I am going to give you that answer here, partly because I think it is a pretty good answer, and partly because if there is any philosophy underlying this at-

tempt to put the fear of God in this village it is here.

“Somewhere,” I began, “there is a Japanese fable about a painter who had painted wonderful pictures of dragons, making them seem almost beautiful. A dragon saw one of these pictures one day and said to himself, ‘If he thinks so well of me when he has never seen me how much more will be like me when he has looked upon me?’ So he went and stuck his head through the window of the painter’s studio. The painter took one look at the dragon and then fled in terror. Some of us are feeling like that painter in regard to Wood’s Socialism.

“I do not stand here as any champion of capitalism. It may be that capitalism is the father of this bundle of poverty and wretchedness that you lay at the door, but we want you to *prove it* before we believe it, and until you make your charges specific and base them on scientific data and express them in plain, every-day language we are going to be very careful about passing judg-

ment. You must give us something besides rhetoric before we help you try to blow up the institutions our fathers have founded through generations of toil. We want facts, not phrases. We will not be satisfied with any Thomas Lawson pyrotechnics about the 'System.' We've heard about the 'System' from every half-baked, yellow muck-raker for ten years. But we have yet to hear a description of it in cool, plain, scientific language. It is always with a collection of high-sounding epithets and impassioned phrases.

"I protest against Mr. Wood's class hatred. He told us that the man who had a thousand dollars could go out and hire one thousand men at one dollar a day and be their slave driver for that day. He gave us the impression that there was no room in the heart of Jesus Christ for rich men. Mr. Wood looked upon all rich as powerless to help in the progress of the work of the world, except as they forsook their riches and de-classed themselves. He told us how he had

declassed himself, had adopted a flannel shirt (or perhaps a pair of them) which he wore on all occasions.

“I want to say just three things about that flannel shirt. First; I want to ask Mr. Wood since when have flannel shirts been cheaper than boiled shirts? I don’t know where he gets his or what he pays for them, but I know that for years my dream of luxury has been the possession of a white flannel shirt. Second; I suppose, however, you will say that flannel is to you a symbol of poverty and that you have adopted it to signify your complete disowning of any class but the proletary class. Well, so be it. But, in that case, why did you not give up your recent trip to Rome until the rest of the proletary class could afford to go? Third; granted the sincerity of your intentions in adopting that shirt when you were under the impression that it was a poor man’s shirt, can you understand how it impresses us as a violent form of snobbishness? Yes, snobbishness! You wave a flannel shirt at us

and say that you are more righteous than we because you are poorer. My friend, since when has poverty become a trade mark of righteousness?

“One thing more about that shirt. You put a great deal of stress upon being a follower of one Jesus of Nazareth, and you think you were a follower of His when you refused to accede to the wishes of your hostess in wearing a less conspicuous garb. Let me remind you of one of that poor man’s parables. There was once a King whose son was to be married. The King sent his servants into the highways and byways and invited good people and bad to come to the wedding. ‘But when the King came in to behold the guests, he saw there a man who had not on a wedding garment; and he saith unto him, Friend, how camest thou in hither not having a wedding garment? And he was speechless. Then the King said to the servants, Bind him hand and foot, and cast him out into the outer darkness; there shall be the weeping and the gnashing of teeth.’

“Mr. Wood, the world has gone too far for your class hatred. That gasoline engine that you spoke of and a thousand other wonders of modern science have been helping men to get together faster, and as they have been getting together they have been coming to understand each other better, to realize that they are all pretty much alike—of the same flesh and blood—and as they have come to understand each other better class hatred has been vanishing like the mists before the dawn. In this audience there are wide extremes of wealth but there is not a man in the house but has worked his way up from poor boyhood in spite of all the oppression of which you spoke. And there are no class lines in this house, and there is no snobbishness, unless it is the snobbishness of your flannel shirt. Come, wake up! The Kingdom of God is not yonder in some distant age, it is among us now, here, right here in Hilldale.

“And this brings us to my last protest. I not only protest against your unfairness to

the employer, I protest against your unfairness to the working man. Over against your picture of the employer as a slave driver, I remember this sentence from a statement by Henry Ford, who is joining the ranks of hundreds and thousands of progressive employers. Said Mr. Ford: 'We hope to have the satisfaction of making every one of the twenty-six thousand employees in our plant contented, comfortable, and prosperous.' You may say that Mr. Ford is an exceptional employer. Perhaps he is. And it may be that his plan is not practical and will do more harm than good. But I submit that that man's spirit is the spirit that is working through the hearts of successful employers everywhere. Look at John Wanamaker's store in New York, A. Shuman's store in Boston, Marshall Field's in Chicago. They are doing what they can to work out the Golden Rule, the extent to which they are able to do unto others as they would be done by is counted the criterion of their success in the business world. It takes brains



to work out the Golden Rule and some employers have not yet sufficient brains to work it. But what assurance have you given us that employers under Socialism will have any more brains or any greater ability to work out the Golden Rule than they have today?

“But I say I protest primarily against your unfairness to the American working man. If he is the man you have made him out to be he is a combination of a cringing slave, an ignorant, down-trodden clod, and a vicious revolutionist. You have given him no credit for a desire to meet his employer half way in the attempt to work out a just economic basis for labor and capital. You have not one word to say in behalf of the great host of working men who have made good and who are making good, who have made true friends with their employers. You picture them all in one great class of oppressed slaves. I have been an employee myself. I suppose every man in your audience here has been an employee. Eighty per cent. of them,

yes, ninety per cent., are employees today, and I think I speak for them when I say that the average American working man today resents your calling him a slave. He is self-respecting, he is doing his best to make the most of his opportunities, he is trying to educate his children, he is reading, he is thinking, he is serving his country as well as he knows how. He may not always be satisfied with the amount of wages he gets or with certain conditions of his job. Being made of flesh and blood he is also likely to neglect opportunities now and then for advancement, to skip over some of his work in a half-hearted fashion. But your average American working man is no slave. He bears no hatred for his employer. Most of us realize that if we work hard enough and make use of our opportunities, if we are successful in finding new ways of gaining the confidence of our fellow men, we, too, may be employers and there is no position of trust or of power that we cannot obtain and hold if only we have enough brains and character. If you want

our sympathy with your cause you must get it by some other method than by appealing to us as slaves and trying to play upon our passions.

“In place of Mr. Wood’s religion that would cure the ills of the world by overthrowing capital and re-distributing wealth I offer you a religion of work and of will. I offer a religion of clean hands and pure heart and right spirit. Mr. Wood’s religion says, ‘Save the man by environment.’ The religion I offer you in the name of Christ says, ‘Save the environment through the man.’ There is an idea abroad in the land today that the way to make this world happy and saintly is to distribute equally the world’s wealth. It is no new theory, it has been in the world, I suppose, as long as laziness and inefficiency and loose thinking have been in the world.

“In place of Mr. Wood’s class hatred I offer you a religion of co-operation. As I look around me I see not crowds of men hating one another, I see crowds of men

anxious to serve one another, wanting only to know how. There are one hundred and fifty men and women here today who came in the hope that a prophet of God would show them some new way to be of service to their fellow men. The prophet showed no way but the way of hate. I offer you a religion, I say, of co-operation. If you want to serve your fellow men come put your shoulder beside ours in this church and in our Neighborhood Association. We will begin in practical ways to make this community clean and happy and democratic. We will work with our school teachers, we will work with our county officials, we will work with every man who wants our help in any undertaking for the public good.

“In place of Mr. Wood’s religion, that has no faith in human nature, I offer you a religion that writes as the first article in its creed, ‘I believe in my fellow man, believe that the good in him is stronger than the bad, believe that he is filled with infinite capacity

for service, believe that if I give him faith and fellowship and hope he will give me faith and fellowship and hope in return, believe that there is no barrier of selfishness, of greed, nor of sin but faith and persistence and the Golden Rule will break it down.' This religion I offer you as the religion of democracy."

This may have been bad courtesy to Wood as a guest. But a minister has a greater responsibility to the truth and to his congregation than to his guest. The congregation filed out of the church and gathered in groups in the church yard, some upholding Wood and others demanding to know why I had invited "such an idiot" to the pulpit.

When the last group had broken up or continued its discussion along the road, I sat upon the church steps and formulated this resolution: To be exceedingly wary in the future of the so-called social reformer who has never reformed anything but yet talks and talks and talks, showing only words in-

stead of results; and in the meanwhile to go on with our social experiments and constructive practical efforts with less talk and more work.

## CHAPTER VIII

### OPERATING THE NEIGHBOR- HOOD HOUSE

IT was a big thing to build such a building. It would be a bigger thing to run it so that it would fulfil the purposes for which it was built. To make the motion picture show, the bowling alleys, the social room, the games, and the fire department serve the entire community, the women and children as well as the men, to make them the means of cultivating friendship and civic pride and patriotism—here was a task that would take brains and diplomacy, energy and perseverance. It would need men and women who had “frequent crops of new ideas and were not afraid to winnow them with the flail of practical experiment.”

We must keep this building from becoming a charitable institution. We hadn't all united

to build it for the needy and down-trodden. There were few needy and no down-trodden here. There wasn't a young man or woman in the town who could not make a good living if he but had ambition enough to get it and work for it. We were going to make that building self-supporting. Better that some members would have to work overtime or secure extra jobs or make sacrifices than that the privileges of the house be given to them free, only to be abused. The Neighborhood House should be for the ambitious, not for the idlers. It should be for those who wanted to pay their way, and for them only.

From our experience in Neighbor Freeman's barn we had learned that free privileges are abused privileges, and that popular government by the public assembly plan does not produce efficiency. With these two lessons in mind we drafted bylaws for the management of the house placing it under the care of a House Committee, which should be appointed annually by the President of the Neighborhood Association. The various



activities of the house were divided into eight departments and each department was made the special charge of one member of the House Committee. Thus Mrs. Townsend was made the head of the Women's Department, with all activities pertaining to women exclusively under her jurisdiction; Mr. Dan Cushman was appointed head of the department of grounds and tennis court; Mr. Fred Black of the bowling alleys; Mr. Ludwig Jackson of entertainments; Mr. Edwards of accounts and rules; Mr. Freeman of carpentry repairs, and Mr. Saunders of masonry and plumbing repairs. As chairman of the House Committee, it became my business to see that these various departments worked together and to have frequent conferences with the department heads. As my office was in the Neighborhood House, this was a convenient and satisfactory arrangement.

It was practically a commission form of government. The department heads were responsible to me as chairman of the House Committee. I was responsible to the Presi-

dent of the Association. The President in turn was responsible to the Directors of the Association and they were elected by members. The commission form of government is not a substitute for popular government. It is a corrective. It is a form of popular government itself, but one from which the evils and dangers of mob rule are eliminated. We had tried in Neighbor Freeman's barn the election of club officers directly by members in popular meetings. We had found that the officers so elected were usually chosen on the basis of popularity rather than on the basis of efficiency or integrity.

The bylaws also provided that in order to help pay the running expenses of the house and in order to make its benefits appreciated and respected, the bowling and pool privileges should be restricted to the male members of the Neighborhood Association, who should pay fifty cents a month dues, and to women and girl members of the Neighborhood Association, who should pay ten cents dues; the persons paying these dues to be known as

**Recreation Members.** A charge of ten cents a game in addition to these dues was made for the use of the bowling alleys and of two cents a cue for the use of the pool table.

The proof of the wisdom of the bylaws and the commission form of the government for the house has been in the result. From the time of its opening the house has been self-supporting. The attendance has averaged between seven and eight hundred a week, and this in a community of less than twelve hundred population. Here is a typical week's program:

SUN: MAR. 11—2:00 P. M. POLISH-ENGLISH  
CLASS.

MON: " 12—7:30 P. M. SEX HYGIENE FOR  
GIRLS UNDER CARE OF VIL-  
LAGE NURSE.  
7:30 P. M. BLUE BIRD CLUB.  
8:00 P. M. CAMP FIRE GIRLS.

TUE: " 13—7:30 P. M. FIRST AID CLASS  
FOR BOY SCOUTS.  
8:00 P. M. BOY SCOUTS.

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WED: " 14—7:00 P. M. POLISH-ENGLISH  
CLASS.

8:00 P. M. MOTION PIC-  
TURES. ADMISSION, 10 AND  
15 CENTS.

THU: " 15—7:00 P. M. POLISH-ENGLISH  
CLASS.

8:00 P. M. MEETING OF  
CEMETERY ASSOCIATION.

FRI: " 16—8:00 P. M. DANCING CLASS.

SAT: " 17—8:00 P. M. MOTION PIC-  
TURES. ADMISSION, 10 AND  
15 CENTS.

This program did not suddenly materialize as soon as the house was opened. Every item on it was built up. Leaders had to be found for young people's organizations—Boy Scouts, Camp Fire Girls, Choral Society, and Dramatic Club. Occasionally some leader proved unsatisfactory and we found it necessary to secure a new one, or old leaders became discouraged or tired or perhaps they moved from the community. The

search for leaders was an almost constant one.

The average existence of a young people's organization such as a band or boys' club is about one and one-half or two years. The organization does not necessarily go to smash at the end of that time, but it usually has to be reorganized with new members and a new program. Thus the Dramatic Club, which we organized the first winter, went along swimmingly for about a year and a half. By that time the novelty had worn off, interest had declined, and the attendance at the meetings had become small and forced. So we organized a Choral Society, which lasted about two years with varying success and interest. The Choral Society was made up of the same members who had been in the Dramatic Club. When interest in choral work grew lax, dramatic work was revived. In the same way the Boy Scouts gave place to the "Standard Bearers" and the "Church Club." These, in their turn, have given place to Boy Scouts again. Just as an individual

boy will play marbles until he is tired of them and then take up baseball, and then fishing or tennis, until the pleasure in each becomes dull, and then begin the cycle again and repeat it over and over, groups of young people have their group toys which they take up, play with, throw away, forget, take up again, play with, throw away, etc., etc., until their leaders grow gray or are sent to an asylum. The little organizations all have their day.

“ In the morning they are like grass which groweth up,  
In the morning it flourisheth and groweth;  
In the evening it is cut down and withereth.”

How eagerly we watched the financial returns of the house that first month after its opening—for in these we believed we had the index of its usefulness and the community's appreciation. During the weeks just before the opening of the house I had begun to have such fears—such chilled pedal extremities—on this subject that I wished I might be “ suddenly called to a larger field.”

But our fears were soon at rest. A stream of nickels and dimes began to pour in and has continued to the present day. It has cost us about \$4,000.00 a year to run the Neighborhood House. This amount has come in in nickels and dimes from motion picture shows, bowling alleys, pool table, etc. Here is a typical year's financial statement:

MAY 25, 1915 TO MAY 25, 1916.

### RECEIPTS

Bowling Alleys.....	\$ 698.15
Motion Pictures.....	1791.65
Eucler and Dance.....	217.50
Dancing Class.....	138.43
Entertainments and Lectures.....	59.60
Tennis .....	26.05
Pool .....	65.80
Tobacco Stand.....	197.30
Miscellaneous Receipts.....	10.16
Rental of Auditorium.....	87.50
Rental of Fire Department Room.....	252.00
Ice Cream.....	153.44
Monthly Dues.....	341.60
	<hr/>
	\$4039.18

*EXPENDITURES*

Bowling Alleys.....	\$ 467.21
Motion Pictures.....	1077.43
Eucler and Dance.....	125.38
Dancing Class.....	53.50
Entertainments and Lectures.....	40.00
Tennis .....	16.00
Pool .....	.81
Tobacco Stand.....	154.16
Miscellaneous Expenses.....	45.63
Repairs .....	43.19
Equipment .....	131.66
Ice Cream.....	176.90
Light .....	188.75
Motor .....	4.24
Superintendent .....	855.00
Grounds .....	126.00
Fuel .....	269.51
Printing .....	9.75
Taxes .....	91.32
Newspapers and Magazines.....	2.50
	<hr/>
	\$3878.94
Profit .....	160.24
	<hr/>
	\$4039.18

The most important thing we had to learn in running the house successfully, a thing underlying programs and finances, was discipline, or "who was boss." Considerable



dissatisfaction was felt among some of the members because the House Committee seemed to have so much power and the members so little, also because of the commercial charges on the recreation facilities. This dissatisfaction blazed into fire one night at a meeting of the members when a motion was put and unanimously carried recommending to the House Committee a reduction in the charges of the bowling alleys from ten cents a game to five cents a game. This meeting had been carefully planned and caught the House Committee off guard. The committee, however, decided to accept the recommendation for one month with the understanding that if the revenue from the bowling alleys showed a substantial decline, so that the building would not be self-supporting, the original charge of ten cents a game would be reinstated. The trial was made. The bowling alleys were used probably ten per cent. more than they had been in the month preceding, but the net result was a forty per cent. decline in revenue and

the building that month showed a deficit of \$30.00.

Whereupon, as chairman of the House Committee, I called a meeting of the members to lay this matter before them and to ask that they rescind their recommendation of the preceding month. It would have been possible, of course, for the House Committee to have simply reinstated the old charge without action by the members. But it would have a better moral effect if the members should make the recommendation in the same way that they had made it for the reduced charge.

When the time came for the members' meeting, however, no one showed up. It was a ticklish situation. I found that the members had all gone down to the fire department and were having a fire department meeting there. It happened that the members of the fire department, with a few exceptions, were also members of the Neighborhood House. So into the fire department meeting I marched. I interrupted the chairman and

explained that there was House business that needed to be attended to which preceded the fire department business. I laid before them the situation and made an appeal for a square deal. After a few moments of suspense, during which a few of the members gasped for air, the man who had made the original motion to reduce the bowling alley charge rose to his feet and made a motion to reinstate the ten cent charge. The motion was seconded and carried unanimously. I then turned the meeting back to the fire department chairman and went about my business. Everything considered, the affair, while unpleasant, had a wholesome effect. The authority of the House Committee was established.

## CHAPTER IX

### THE MORALS OF THE MOVIES

“SIMPLY atrocious! We really can’t allow this sort of motion picture in our Neighborhood House. It is not at all suitable for children—altogether too familiar with drinking dens and crime. Why, how in the world did you come to choose such a picture for this place?” Thus accusingly spoke a gentleman greatly interested in the morals of our community.

Concerning the same show, a nice young girl complained that the pictures were “too tame, not enough punch!”

The fear of God in an American village requires among other things a good motion picture show. If the young people of Smithville don’t find it in their home town they will go somewhere else to find it. They will never

take pride in Smithville if they must go to Jonesville to find their movies.

In our town the task of managing the motion picture show in our Neighborhood House fell ultimately to me. I knew what we wanted—but getting it proved to be another matter. We had wanted a movie show that we need not be ashamed of, one that we could feel was doing some good in the world, bringing fun into the lives of people whose lot was pretty hard, broadening their mental horizons, giving them the advantages of books and plays and travel which they were either too tired or too poor to enjoy first hand.

The evils usually connected with the motion picture show—evils which we set out to overcome—are three:

1. The show's surroundings. Often the theater is situated near saloons or public dance halls which do their best to attract the crowds as they go to and from the movies. Around the entrances of the theater a group of human vultures usually hover,

waiting to flirt or to make familiar remarks or to "pick up" girls.

2. Light and ventilation. Works of evil multiply under the cover of darkness and the danger of poorly lighted theaters to weak-minded and weak-willed young people can hardly be exaggerated. As for air, it is impossible to suit all tastes.

Some like it hot,  
Some like it cold,  
Some like it in the show  
Seven days old.

Foul air, hot or cold, is a menace to the public health. But many shows have such low ceilings that the air cannot but get foul. I have been in shows in New York City where the air became so polluted that an usher had to go up and down the aisles with an automizer, spraying cheap perfume on the floor in order to cover the foul odors.

3. Films. Here was the rub! It had not been difficult to overcome the first two evils—our Neighborhood House was in a conven-

ient place, the surroundings were wholesome, and the light and ventilation were satisfactory. But to secure good films and a steady run of them was another matter. We had believed, as probably most people do yet, that reels could be selected from a film exchange just as fruit is selected from an Italian wagon. This is not the case.

When you contract with a film exchange, as a rule, you put yourself on its circuit for better or worse and you take its pictures when your turn comes for them. You cannot pick and choose your reels. You may specify so many reels of drama, so many reels of comedy, and so many reels of farce. But that is the best you can do for a steady run of pictures. For special occasions it is possible to pick up reprints of old pictures. But the exhibitor cannot even see one of these old reels and must judge them only by their subjects, or by the "press matter" describing them. As I write, a row is going on in a neighboring village between the Methodist parson, the motion picture exhibitor, and the

Scoutmaster of a local troop of Boy Scouts. The Boy Scouts of the Methodist Church desired to give an entertainment with the end in view of raising money for uniforms. The preacher approved and the motion picture exhibitor of the town offered to provide a motion picture at cost.

What picture would they have? Well, it must have a good story—something patriotic preferred. The exhibitor had a list of reprints that might provide such a picture for a special occasion. Yes, here was one, “Our Country First.” That sounded well. Surely it would be patriotic. So the entertainment was advertised, the tickets sold, the picture procured, and the audience gathered. The Scouts had worked hard selling the tickets and the audience filled every seat in the theater. Then the picture was thrown upon the screen. “Our Country First” was its title and somewhere in it there was a brave soldier boy. But the major part of it was given to realistic portrayals of the white slave traffic, of gambling hells, and the doings of



the underworld. About half-way through the picture the parson arose and left the room. He returned later, in time to make a burning speech to the audience and to call down fire upon the head of the exhibitor. The friendship ties between parson and exhibitor are now slack. I, as parson and exhibitor, can sympathize with both of them. I can understand the parson's embarrassment, but I know that the poor devil of an exhibitor is not to blame. His only opportunity to select was from a list of reprints and from these only by their titles.

For a steady run of picture programs it is impossible (at this writing) to select reels. Each exchange has its limited number of films and its definite circle or route of customers or movie houses which it must supply. The films are rushed from one to another in regular order. As a film is practically worn out at the age of eight or nine months, it is the exchange's business to see that every picture is kept on the road working for all it

is worth. A film lying on the shelf waiting for some exhibitor to come and look it over is only "boarding" on the exchange. The exhibitor must simply get on the circuit and take what comes for better or worse. If he does not like the service, he can simply cancel his contract at its expiration and try another exchange.\*

\* In order to make clear the present situation in regard to motion picture films let me quote from a report by the Social Center Committee of the People's Institute of New York City. Their experience in trying to get good reels for the Social Centers in connections with the Public Schools of New York was precisely our experience.

"For several years, the great bulk of all motion pictures has been produced by certain large groups of manufacturers, distributed to the public through similar groups of middlemen or exchanges, exhibited in a fugitive way, and after a period of four or six months, retired into oblivion.

"The film exchanges contain the output of motion pictures for approximately a half-year prior to any given date. No single film exchange has more than a fraction even of this half-year's output. A film exchange purchases the minimum practicable number of copies of any one subject, and aims to get the maximum use of each subject purchased. The typical motion picture theater changes its program daily, and films are scheduled for long periods in advance, being passed ahead daily from show to show. Each film exchange has a group of regular customers who pay a fixed price by the week, this price being greater or less in accord with the age of the films which are secured. The rental price of a film diminishes from the first day it is made public to that time when it disappears from circulation; this without reference to the physical or optical condition of the film.

"The above remarkable trade system holds the film art in a grip of iron, and insures a virtual monopoly of motion pictures to the commercial shows. The trade system is not a result of a conspiracy or of trusts or of anything that can or should be reached through law or court procedure, but it

We began by contracting with one of the largest exchanges for their twice-a-week program. It was called "commercial stuff" and consisted of a program of two reels of drama, including much blood and thunder (either western or gangster), three reels of comedy,

has been developed in such a way as to produce maximum of quick profit with minimum of risk to exhibitors, exchanges, and manufacturers.

"Now, how does the community or lecture center stand related to the above situation?

"A little thought will lead to exactly the result of long experience. The commercial show uses films seven days in the week, exhibits them in a routine manner, does not as a rule even try to select its program; and such is the method of doing business to which the film exchange is accustomed. But the community center uses films only on one or two or three evenings a week, and by this fact alone it is placed at a disadvantage in the competition for good films. But the community center needs to have special programs. It wants programs for children in the afternoons, programs with a special human or social purpose for adults in the evening. The center is already placed at a disadvantage by the fact that it uses only an intermittent program. But when an effort is made to select films, the community center becomes actually unpopular with the exchange. The exchanges are not stocked or equipped to provide either intermittent programs or selected programs, and the community center is helpless in the face of the circumstance.

"It will now be plain to the reader why the community center is unable to improve materially on the film programs of the commercial shows. By a great effort the community center director may secure a proportion of distinctly educational subjects, but he will usually be unable to get the educational subject which is also a dramatic and thrilling one; such a film will be already pre-empted by the commercial show houses which are the privileged customers of the exchange. The inert and banal scenic films, the comedies which fail to be humorous, the historical films which are not dramatic—these the community center may have for its program, provided they belong to the output of films for the past six months."

including one farce with the usual variations of the funny man carrying a ladder and striking passers-by in the stomach, and one reel of current events about six months old.

The first night that a program of this "commercial stuff" was presented, I watched the pictures eagerly, but with a sinking heart. Before the show was over I crept out of the building and hurried home. It was a Saturday night and I felt like a hypocrite as I tried to preach in the church on the following day. The pictures had been fairly dripping with blood and packed with crimes such as a dime novel would not dare to print. In vain I hoped that this first program might be an exception, but the second and third shows were no better. What troubled me most was that many in the audience seemed to like such pictures. The more killing there was the more they seemed to enjoy them. I studied other motion picture shows in neighboring villages and found the same situation there.

It is to the credit of America that indecent films cannot survive. Neither the people nor

the managers want them. But it is the shame of America that our demand for action has become so hectic that the people will put up with pictures of crime, stealing, revenge, and murder. Action is good and most of us care for a story with punch. But it is our disgrace that we let our energy and our demand for excitement follow the path of least resistance to blood and thunder motion pictures. To have heroes and to worship them may be very well. But will the time ever come when we realize that heroes seldom carry guns? In every day life probably only one man in a thousand carries a revolver and we call him a coward. In the movies about one man in five carries a revolver and uses it three or four times between meals. And it is the hero, of course, who uses his gun to best advantage. It is wonderful the things our heroes can do in the movies—and still be heroes!

I began to write letters and to make appeals to the film exchange, but I only made myself unpopular in that quarter. No op-

portunity was given to select films. Film exchanges do not operate on that basis. The only films that could be selected, as a steady run, I found to be what were called "educational films." This sounded good. I introduced one reel a night of this so-called "educational stuff," mixed in with the commercial. The educational reel proved to be nothing but illustrated geography—bad geography and poorly illustrated. Occasionally there was a semi-interesting picture of some industry. After watching one of these reels at a neighboring theater one evening—a reel that portrayed a modern chicken farm—a sixteen year old girl arose in disgust and left the theater. As she passed the box office window, she said: "To hell with your chickens!" This seemed to be the opinion of our audience on the educational reels and I had to give them up because of their unpopularity. The school children said they had enough geography in school, the adults said they did not come to be educated; they came to be amused.

We canceled our contract and secured the services of another film exchange, but with no better results. Then we tried another exchange and still another. The exchanges and producers had but one idea; to make money. That was well and good, for they were in the business for that purpose. But they had but one idea *how* to make money: to provide thrills—hate thrills, fear thrills, sex thrills, love thrills, murder thrills—nothing but thrills. “You can’t help making money with these pictures; there are fifty-seven varieties of thrills in them”—this was the gist of the exchanges’ advertisements to the exhibitor. As I write, one such advertisement from one of the largest film corporations is before me. It pictures two speeding locomotives rushing toward each other on the same track and within ten feet of a head-on collision. But through that ten-foot gap a large automobile, steered by a pretty girl, is madly rushing. The advertisement announces:

THE FEARLESS FILM STAR  
HELEN HOLMES  
IN "THE RAILROAD RAIDERS"  
A POWERFUL NEW RAILROAD NOVEL IN  
FIFTEEN CHAPTERS  
THE MOST EXCITING, MOST STUPEN-  
DOUS CHAPTER PLAY EVER FILMED.  
A STIRRING NOVEL OF RAILROAD LIFE  
—FULL OF *ACTION, PUNCH, THRILLS!*  
ANOTHER BIG BOX OFFICE MAGNET  
FOR EXHIBITORS.

There may have been film exchanges and producers offering the products of playwrights who were not totally devoid of imagination and gray matter and who could picture courage without the accompaniment of clashing railroad trains and Colt revolvers—but I could not locate them.

Finally, just as we were becoming discouraged and almost ready to give up, a new motion picture corporation appeared on the horizon. It controlled the output of several large producing companies and confined itself largely to film productions of dramas that had been successful on Broadway. This corporation offered its service in two pro-



grams a week to small exhibitors as well as large and based its charge for its reels not only upon their age, but upon the population of the town, making it possible for a very small town to secure the same class of films as those shown in larger towns and cities and at moderate prices. Moreover, this corporation announced the revolutionary and heretical belief that the *public wanted good drama more than sensationalism*. It frankly announced that it was going to try to furnish good drama because it would be more profitable than sensationalism. We clutched at this corporation as a drowning man at a straw.

The corporation in practice was more conservative than its announcement would lead one to believe. It still kept one foot in the mud, evidently fearing that if it pulled loose altogether from the mire its progress would be too flighty; or possibly it did not want to lose all contact with other movie corporations. At any rate about one picture in eight or ten was objectionable, basing its appeal on sensa-

tionalism or upon the ecstatic enjoyment that an audience is supposed to find in the antics of a drunken man. About eighty per cent. of the pictures, however, were worth while. Each picture was a whole evening's entertainment in itself, but we soon added to the Saturday evening programs one reel of Burton Holmes' Travelogues, and to the Wednesday evening programs one reel of light comedy. These additional features were provided by the same company. Here was a typical month's program:

#### PICTURES FOR MARCH

- SAT: March 3—Mary Pickford in "The Eternal Grind."
- WED: " 7—Wallace Reid and Cleo Ridgely in "The Love Mask."
- SAT: " 10—Marguerite Clark in "Molly Make Believe."
- WED: " 14—John Barrymore in "The Red Widow."
- SAT: " 17—Marie Doro in "The Heart of Nora Flynn."
- WED: " 21—Pauline Frederick in "The Moment Before."
- SAT: " 24—Dustin Farnum in "David Garrick."

- WED:     "     28—Valentine Grant in "The Innocent Lie."  
 SAT:     "     31—Geraldine Farrar in "Marie Rosa."

Such plays, together with the Burton Holmes Travelogues and the comedies which are shown with them, furnished our village with movie entertainment twice a week. The audiences were made up of families—the children, parents, and often the grandparents. One of our own young men trained himself to run the machine and became our operator. Neighbor Freeman (who can always be counted upon to do more than his share of community work), Ludwig Jackson, the grocer, and Wm. Burkley, a young carpenter, volunteered their time in selling tickets on alternate evenings. We had overcome the bad surroundings, the poor light and ventilation, and the sensational films of the average theater. Moreover, our motion picture show paid a large share of the running expenses of the Neighborhood House. It was by no means a perfect show, but we seldom had to blush for it. And Neighbor

Smith and Neighbor Jones felt that they could bring their wives and their children and all would have a good time and no one be bored or ashamed.

And some day, we hoped, we would find in our movie show films which would portray the drama of every day life, the pathos and joy of the men and women about us; perhaps we might see heroes who are not single, handsome and curly haired, heroes who do not always wear soft white shirts and carry guns—yea, we might even find bald-headed heroes and bow-legged ones and married ones!

## CHAPTER X

### FIRES, FIRE DEPARTMENT, AND FIRE WATER

UNLESS a village has a pretty good fire department, the fear of fire is apt to be more real than the fear of God in the minds of property owners. Moreover, a fire department is a social institution in the community. In fact, its importance as a social organization is quite often greater than its efficiency in putting out fires. When our fire equipment consisted of a horse-drawn truck without horses and a few hundred feet of mouse-eaten hose it was, notwithstanding, a social club with a great deal of self-respect. It had bylaws longer than its fire hose. And if the fines provided for in said bylaws for numerous offences, great and small, had ever been collected, a much needed water system

could have been installed in the village with the proceeds.

As it was, our method of fighting fire was romantic, if nothing else. When a man discovered that his house was on fire he yelled the news to any person within hearing. Such a person at once ran to the fire shed, opposite the school-house, found it locked, ran around to a window, shoved it up, climbed in, stumbled around till he found the bell rope and then rang vigorously until the village was aroused. The village went to the fire en masse. They were guided by the smoke. Meantime the firemen, when they heard the bell, dropped their respective jobs on farms and buildings and rushed to the fire shed. It wasn't usually more than a mile away. One of them scared up a team of horses on the way. It didn't matter whose team; it was commandeered. The team was hitched to the truck, the firemen donned helmets, elaborate, if somewhat faded, and then a mad dash to the fire was begun, a dash that would have made Paul Revere seem rather gouty. The

fire truck's hand pump may have been antiquated and its hose leaky, but its bell was in excellent condition. Every turn of one of the front wheels clanged that bell and the faster the truck sped the harder and faster the bell clanged. This expedited the horses not a little, for they were not accustomed to have bells clanging just behind their haunches. So the last stage of the run took on something of the aspect of a chariot race. The horses may have seemed anxious to get the truck to the fire, but, as a matter of fact, they were only trying desperately to get away from that persistent bell.

Arrived at the fire the fire department and the entire population ran into the burning house and carried out the furniture, tore up carpets, jerked loose bathroom fixtures, and threw from the windows whatever it was not convenient to take through the doors. At one fire it was said that a conscientious fireman carefully carried out a bucket of slops to a place of safety. That was better than throwing it out of the window. While

the furniture was being carried out, certain firemen in couples worked vigorously at a little hand pump throwing a small stream of water wherever it was needed—either on the burning building or on the crowd of on-lookers. Others formed a line and carried buckets of water from the pool or pump.

But after all a dozen or twenty able-bodied volunteers equipped with good legs and a few buckets are of more value than a fine steamer or motor hose truck manned by lazy and inefficient firemen. The volunteers at least save the furniture and often prevent the blaze from spreading to adjacent buildings. Benjamin Franklin, who organized the first fire brigade in Philadelphia, proved the worth of volunteer firemen equipped only with leather buckets. Had it not been for his small brigade the Quaker City would have had serious trouble with its frequent fires. Even if our fire department's equipment was negligible, we had the foundation of a good company in its personnel. It seemed wise, therefore, to build on this foundation. For that



reason we had incorporated a large fire department room in the basement of our Neighborhood House.

It also seemed wise to amalgamate the fire department with the Neighborhood Association so that when the time came to increase the fire department's apparatus and to make a campaign for subscriptions for this purpose, it would have the backing of the Association and its counsel and direction in the expenditures of its money. A petition, therefore, was prepared by the Hilldale Hook and Ladder Company No. 1 to become one of the departments of the Neighborhood Association. The petition was unanimously granted and five neighbors were appointed as fire directors. The Hook and Ladder Company thereupon hitched itself to its truck and took up its quarters in the fire rooms at the Neighborhood House. A campaign was begun at once for increased efficiency and for more adequate equipment for fire fighting.

The members of the fire department made a house-to-house canvass of the property

owners of the district, acquainting themselves with the fire equipment and water supply of each property. The fire directors took upon themselves a financial campaign to secure subscriptions for the purchase of a motor hose truck equipped with a pump operating from the automobile motor. They had no trouble in securing subscriptions. The fear of fire was as great as in a primitive community. There had been numerous small homes and buildings burned and almost any time in the year one could point to the ruins of some mansion destroyed by fire. Insurance rates had increased until the average frame dwelling was assessed \$1.00 for every \$100.00 of insured value. \$1,500.00 was subscribed in short order and the motor hose truck was purchased. It was excellently built out of a second-hand chassis of a very good car of foreign make and the pump operating from its motor, while guaranteed to throw one hundred and fifty gallons per minute, in actual use threw from two hundred to two hundred and fifty gallons per

minute. It carried five hundred feet of underwriters' hose, extension ladders, eight two and one-half gallon fire extinguishers, fire axes, etc. At their own expense the members of the fire department painted this motor truck red and added many useful articles to its equipment.

To each householder a card (about the size of a post card and printed in large red letters) was sent to be hung by the telephone, the card bearing this legend:

FIRE !

IN CASE OF FIRE CALL  
THE HILLDALE FIRE DEPARTMENT  
TELEPHONE 569

A fire gong was connected with the Neighborhood House telephone and a fire alarm apparatus built close to the building. A Motor Hose Company was at once organized among the firemen. The fire department became composed of the Motor Hose Company and the Hook and Ladder Company. And had all the young men who wanted to

belong to the Motor Hose Company been admitted and given a chance to ride upon the motor their weight would have crushed the machine into the bowels of the earth.

A bitter rivalry between the Motor Hose Company and the Hook and Ladder Company immediately developed. The members of the Hook and Ladder Company tried to make up in speed and individual effectiveness what they lacked in equipment. Drills of both companies were held several times a month and on every holiday. Most important meetings were held two or three evenings a week. Amendments to the constitution and bylaws of the different companies were made by the yard and reconsidered and remade at succeeding meetings. This was all as it should be, for it resulted in the most intense interest in the fire department and the members simply prayed for a good fire to show what they could do.

In order to put the department on a permanent financial basis a Fire District was created under the laws of the State of New

York, and a Board of Fire Commissioners (to take the place of the Neighborhood Association) elected by the people of the whole district. The Neighborhood Association then donated all the new equipment to the Fire District and its maintenance was provided for out of tax funds.

If I were writing fiction instead of fact, I might work up some sort of dramatic climax to this chapter by describing some spectacular fire where the fire department showed its mettle and its efficiency in putting out a blaze as well as in carrying out the furniture. But, as a matter of fact, fire departments are not organized for dramatic purposes. Their efficiency is not tested by spectacular feats that hit the front pages of newspapers. They are organized for the mundane purpose of preventing small and incipient blazes from becoming big and spectacular. Their efficiency is not so much indexed by their conduct at big fires as by the *absence of big fires*. The hero of the volunteer fire department is not the man who saves

a life from a building ready to fall in smoking ruins. He is the man who can work steadily in a fire company during the weeks and months between fires, keeping himself eternally ready to "get there" at the first alarm. He is punctual at drills. He answers present at every roll call. He guards the department from the subtle influences that would weaken its morale.

So the history of our reorganized fire department is not dramatic. We became proud of it because we found that it could put out incipient conflagrations before they reached the spectacular stage. Our volunteer firemen didn't rescue lives from burning buildings, *because they didn't let the buildings burn.*

Nevertheless the dramatic element was not lacking that first year, although it came in a way we least expected. While waiting for a fire and a chance to use their new equipment, the firemen worked off their surplus energy in making further amendments to their by-laws. These were finally so plastered up with amendments, many of them contradic-

tory or ambiguously worded, that a corporation lawyer would have had great difficulty in interpreting the document. So it was decided that an entire new set of bylaws must be drafted. This was done and I was one of a committee for the purpose. The committee worked several evenings in getting these new bylaws in shape. In the article entitled "Offenses and Penalties" we incorporated two sections which had always been rules of the department. One of these sections prohibited gambling and the other prohibited liquor from the fire room. When the new set of laws was finally completed we submitted it to the department as a whole for ratification. It took several meetings for the department to consider it, for these laws were held as important as the laws of the Medes and Persians. It was at one of the meetings held during my absence from the community that a few of the fellows, who were opposed to the prohibition against liquor and gambling, persuaded the department to vote to omit these two sections.

I heard of the omission soon after the laws had been submitted for approval to the Board of Fire Commissioners, and I made a protest to the Board. The Board sustained the protest and ordered the omitted sections to be reinserted.

"But," protested Dan Cushman, who was Chief of the department, "I'm afraid some of these fellows are going to resign if these prohibitions are inserted."

"Well," replied Mr. Stuart, President of the Board, "let them resign."

"No," spoke up Mr. Grant, another member of the Board, "don't let them resign, find out who they are, and then fire them. Fire them all. Be sure you get every one. If you leave two or three they will only make trouble later."

This was small comfort to the Chief, who returned to the department and reported the Board's opinions. There was much brave talk which finally issued in a call for a special meeting. The proceedings of that meeting, while "entirely friendly," as a news-



paper afterward put it, were such that the neighbors did not sleep until after their accustomed hours for retiring. I quote from a column of the "Dellwood Bugle":

"An interesting debate which has aroused the interest of the neighborhood took place at the special meeting of the fire department last Monday evening. The debate was upon the question whether or not the fire department should incorporate in its bylaws rules against gambling and liquor in the fire room or on the premises.

"Those in favor of allowing liquor and gambling in the fire room argued that the personal liberties of the members of the fire department should not be interfered with; that the Fire Commissioners nor no one else had any right to dictate in the matter; that the Commissioners' business was purely the financial end of the fire department; that liquor was allowed at the Country Club and that the fire department was the poor man's club and ought to be allowed the same privilege; that playing poker for a \$10.00 stake was no more gambling than playing in a bowling tournament for a box of cigars or a *bag of peanuts*; that a drink of whiskey after a fire on a cold night might save a fireman from pneumonia, and that the most efficient volunteer fire company of the state allowed liquor and gambling and those added to their efficiency because they attracted more men to the fire department.

"Mr. Morse argued against gambling and liquor in the fire room and on the premises, admitted with pride,

that he had won a sack of peanuts from Chief Cushman in a bowling tournament, and hoped to do so again. He said that it was a far cry between bowling in a bowling tournament and playing in a poker game for a \$10.00 stake, that the element of chance in bowling was at a minimum and skill at a maximum, while in poker chance was at a maximum and skill at a minimum. The law, he said, recognizes this and sanctions a bowling tournament, but prohibits poker for money. As for the Fire Commissioners, he said, their powers were defined by the law of the State of New York, and not by the fire department. They had not tried to dictate nor interfere with the personal liberties of the members, but had advised them against making a false step in this regard, knowing that the introduction of liquor and gambling into the fire room would destroy the good will of the taxpayers, lessen the confidence of the citizens, and soon destroy the fire department. Mr. Morse said that there were several saloons in Hilldale and a large amount of out-of-doors, and if any member felt that he needed liquor or gambling, his needs could probably be attended to elsewhere, but the fire department should be kept clean and its reputation unimpaired. If liquor was allowed as a stimulant it would be most difficult to draw the line as to when stimulants were needed and when they were not. As for the need of a stimulant after a cold night, he held that a cup of coffee might be more effective and less dangerous and more honorable than a glass of whiskey. He denied that the purpose of the fire department was to be a poor man's club; he held that its purpose was to put out fires, and that it ought

not to tolerate anything that would decrease its efficiency in so doing. He said he believed that the majority of the members of the fire department would refuse to belong to the organization if it were turned into a club for drinking and gambling. As for the men of the town being more attracted to a fire department where liquor and gambling were allowed he held that, on the contrary, the best citizens—the brainiest, strongest, and most respected—would be repelled by such a fire department and would give their support and encouragement only to a department that refused to allow liquor and gambling, and that it was not the strongest men of any community who did most of the drinking and gambling, but the weaklings and fools.

“The argument was entirely friendly and closed with a motion to the effect that so long as the fire department is in the Neighborhood House positively no liquor or gambling should be allowed in the fire rooms or upon the premises and that the prohibitions should be incorporated in the bylaws. This motion was carried.”

Thus we established our fire department, equipped it, maintained it, and kept fire-water out of it. Fires were no less frequent than before, but the department saw to it that whenever the fire was reported in time and wherever water was available the small blazes were smothered before they wrought

much damage. In one case where a barn was burning and no water was available, the fire was extinguished with the contents of a cess-pool. Even now as I write here in my little office in the Neighborhood House, two big motor trucks are in the fire room beneath me, a telephone is at my right hand, and at my left a button connected with the fire alarm. I know that if a fire is reported over the telephone I have but to press this button and, within three or four minutes at most, these two motors will be manned and on their way to the fire.

## CHAPTER XI

### A VILLAGE INDUSTRY,

THE construction of the Neighborhood House during the winter of 1913 had been a God-send to many carpenters who would otherwise have been without work. As the winter of 1914 approached, however, the shadows of no-work began to darken the homes of builders. There were forty-nine carpenters in our village and next to the farmers and gardeners, they were our largest industrial class. To be without work not only meant hardship for themselves and their families, but to the butchers and the grocers and the other tradesmen who depended upon their custom. If we could find some plan of providing work for these carpenters and bring more money into the community, we would render a service not only to the carpenters and their families, but to the mer-

chants and to the community as a whole.

Having thought out a plan which might help I called a mass meeting of all the carpenters of the village in the fire department room one evening in November and laid before them the following plan: There were more than one thousand wealthy men in our section of the state and there was no closed season on them. They all needed (whether they knew it or not) garden furniture and bird houses on their estates. Our carpenters could make bird houses and garden furniture as well as any one if they had the right designs and a little help in marketing their products. I offered to provide the designs and help market the products, but the carpenters must do the work, do it well, and take the risk of loss. I had secured bird house designs from the United States Department of Agriculture's Farmers' Bulletin No. 609, and garden furniture designs from friends in the neighborhood and from various photographs and cuts. I proposed that each carpenter take home one of these designs,

make up a sample article from it and bring it to the Neighborhood House for exhibition. When all the samples were accumulated, I proposed to photograph them, make a small catalogue of them and invite prospective customers to the house to see them.

As orders came in they would be turned over to the men who made the samples. Each carpenter would fill the orders he received in his own home workshop. The selling price of each article would be fixed by the price our competitors in other states were charging. Each carpenter would receive eighty per cent. of this price out of which he would pay for labor and material, ten per cent. would be deducted for cash, and the remaining ten per cent. go to the Association to cover the cost of photographs, catalogues, postage, etc.

Of the thirty-five or forty carpenters at that meeting where the plan was proposed, only half a dozen had enough imagination to see anything in it, and naturally these half-dozen were among the best carpenters in the

village. Each of these took home two or three designs, made samples, and brought them to the Neighborhood House. Here they were photographed and a catalogue was made and sent to all the estate owners in our section of the state. For this purpose \$100.00 was needed and was borrowed from the Neighborhood Association.

That first year \$1,100.00 worth of these products were sold, most of it to customers outside the community and all of it made in the home workshops of these half-dozen carpenters. Certain weaknesses in our plan, however, became apparent. First: We had no stock on hand for customers who wanted immediate delivery. Making up stock only after orders had been received and then only on overtime or rainy days gave poor service to customers. Second: Since each carpenter had to buy his own material and make it up altogether by hand without the use of machinery it was costly. Third: Lack of capital. Fourth: Half a dozen workshops gave rise to many petty little inconveniences.



Fifth: Ten per cent. gross profit was not enough to cover the cost of marketing.

Sixth: Too many poor designs.

Moreover, all the work of managing, of salesmanship, and often of delivery fell upon my shoulders. In the midst of the preparation of a sermon I would be called three or four times to exhibit our samples of furniture and bird houses or to listen to the complaints of customers or workmen or to deliver a bench or an order of bird houses ten or fifteen miles away. Or possibly I must trot up to some carpenter's home to demand why in thunder a certain order was not finished. It was my own fault for not planning the scheme better or making allowance at the beginning for a delivery department. Not having made such allowance I took my punishment, my comfort being that work and money were coming into the community and there would be less hardship among the families of the poor.

To correct these weaknesses the carpenters reorganized during the following fall. They

called their venture "The Neighborhood Craft." From twenty business men they borrowed \$2,600.00 capital through our Neighborhood Association. The lenders of the money were the wealthy men on the estates, and they insisted on lending it in such a way that they could not possibly make more than four per cent. on their investment. Five carpenters added \$250.00 to the capital fund out of their wages. They elected a Board of Directors made up of three of the wealthy men who had loaned the capital and three of the workmen, and myself as chairman and general factotum. We sought and obtained the gratuitous advice of architects and garden experts on better designs.

We rented Neighbor Freeman's barn as a common workshop and installed a rip saw, band saw, and morticing machine. Thus our first playhouse became our first workshop. We discontinued the piece work basis and decided to pay a regular day's wage in our shop. We did this because by the piece work

method we could employ the men only through slack seasons and were unable to hold them in the shop during the spring and summer, when there was great need for them to make up special orders, to paint stock and specials, and to crate and ship orders from out of town. Some of our wealthy directors who had had experience in developing factories objected to the day wage basis on the ground that it killed initiative and encouraged slackness. I felt certain, however, that our men would be proof against such tendencies and insisted upon the wage basis. The carpenters elected one of their number to be foreman so that the workshop would have a head who would maintain a high standard of workmanship. I took as my job the getting up of new and better catalogues. Then the carpenters went to work and throughout the winter and spring they used up their capital in making up stock.

The saws buzzed and the hammers rapped through fair weather and foul in Neighbor Freeman's barn. Everybody seemed happy.

The workmanship improved, the designs were more artistic, the prices were no higher than our competitors—the whole arrangement seemed ideal.

When June came we held an exhibition of our products on the grounds of the Neighborhood House. Attractively printed invitations to the exhibition were mailed broadcast. The new catalogues were also sent out. All the influence of the Neighborhood Association was used in boosting the project in our own community and others. Our wealthy neighbors agreed to recommend the Craft to their friends. In fact, every method short of violence was used to bring customers to the exhibition. Two weeks passed without a sale—and then they came. They bought. They went away. They came back and brought their friends along. The sales kept up so steadily that the exhibition was continued on the grounds of the Neighborhood House throughout the summer. In all, \$4,800.00 worth of furniture and bird houses were sold that season.

Then the blow came. Our inventory and financial reckoning at the close of the season showed a loss of \$187.00 on the year's business. Accounts had been kept accurately and a detailed card index system of costs had been employed to stop all leaks. But that \$187.00 loss stared us in the face. It made me feel like a robber. As manager of the enterprise, I had been largely responsible for raising the capital and of course I could not have done it had I not felt that the small percentage of interest that our neighbors asked would be forthcoming. But there we were without any interest and six per cent. of our capital gone. Finding out what had become of that money and how the loss had occurred was a rather bitter experience. But it must be set down here in the record of the starting of this village industry.

After much questioning of the workmen, coupled with my own observations, I found that the loss had come by paying a high daily wage in the workshop to all the craftsmen, when one or two of the men there were not

earning that amount for the Craft. All of the craftsmen, as I have said, were excellent workmen. They did not loaf nor kill time. But one or two of them were exceedingly slow. If they had all eternity to complete their products, those products would probably not have been excelled in strength, beauty, and workmanship. But, unfortunately, they did not have all eternity. They had but a few fleeting months. The result was that each day they received about \$4.00 pay for work which sold for \$3.00. They "ate their heads off," as a farmer would say of cows that ate more than they produced. They not only ate their own heads off, they ate up the profits on the labor of the other men, they ate up the interest on the capital, they ate up part of the capital itself so that the final reckoning showed \$187.00 loss.

But why could not the other workmen in the shop have seen this and made a protest? They had not been used to thinking in terms of interest and profit on each day's labor. The fact that every hour and every minute

of a working day for every one of them meant either profit or loss to all was not a vivid reality. They did not want to complain about a fellow-worker in the union. But most of all they felt that the particular man who was slowest was being protected from the temptations of the "poor man's friend" while in the workshop. They didn't have the heart to see him go.

The workmen as a whole (with one or two exceptions) did not feel any moral responsibility for the loss nor the failure to pay interest. I am quite sure that had each man borrowed his proportion of the general capital individually for a private enterprise he would have felt his responsibility keenly and been most conscientious in making up the loss. But the fact that their responsibility was divided among several workmen seemed in some subtle way to make it less binding upon each one individually. I held myself largely responsible for this situation. If I had managed the thing rightly the men would have felt more strongly their financial obliga-

tions and their individual responsibility for the success of the enterprise.

There was no use wasting tears about it. The thing to do was to rectify the error and to make enough profit during the coming year to make up for the past year's loss. We worked out a new plan for the coming year, abolishing the wage basis in the workshop and going back to the piece work basis. Each craftsman, instead of being paid by the day, would be paid a contract price for each piece. Labor-saving machinery had been installed, the design and workmanship of the articles had been standardized and I believed that good craftsmen by conscientious work could earn a good wage by this method. The craftsmen who were too slow to earn fair wages by this method would automatically drop out. The price paid to each craftsman for the manufacture of an article, including material and labor, with the exception of the last coat of paint would be sixty-five per cent. of the selling price of that article. The selling price would have to be



fixed by the price charged by our competitors for similar articles. This plan would give experienced workmen the chance to earn more than inexperienced or slow workmen. Each workman would be allowed the use of the machinery in the shop and to employ apprentices of his own as he desired, these apprentices to be paid by their respective employers and not by the Craft. This plan, if carried out, guaranteed a thirty-five per cent. gross profit on every article we manufactured. Out of this thirty-five per cent. gross profit would come the expense for catalogues, postage, rent, insurance, fuel, light, material, depreciation of machinery, and interest on the capital invested. At the rate of business which we were then doing this expense could all be paid, leaving a substantial surplus at the end of the year for preferred stock and for dividing among the craftsmen owning common stock.

The meeting of the craftsmen at which this plan was proposed was not exactly happy. We met around a table at the

Neighborhood House. (It is often well to have a table separating the various members of a meeting, and sometimes the wider the table the greater the safety.) Various objections were raised by a few of the men. One held that it would be against the union. Another held that the old plan was good enough. The other objections were modifications or combinations of these two. But in the face of these objections our experience stared us in the face: we had failed to make good on the old plan; we had lost \$187.00. If any one didn't like the new plan, could he suggest a better one that would insure us against such loss for the year ahead?

Finally one workman made this appeal, "Our secretary and manager has stuck by us fellows and always given us a square deal. He started this whole business for us and he ought to have his say about how it's run. I propose that we give his plan a trial. He has worked this thing out and thinks that it will be for the good of everybody concerned. Even if we don't think so let's stand by him

while we try it. If it doesn't work this year we can try some other plan next year."

This was hard common sense. Some of the workmen agreed at once and after a little hesitation the vote was made unanimous in favor of the new plan.

A little while later the man who had been most responsible for our loss dropped out of the Craft. A big hearted friend, who called himself a Socialist and looked upon this new plan as oppression of the poor and honest workman, declined to soil his hands with piece work. But the rest of the craftsmen went to work with good sporting spirit, resolved to put the thing on a business basis and make good the loss.

## CHAPTER XII

### AN EPIDEMIC

Now suddenly the searchlight of a great trial fell upon the neighboring city and the country around about, and we saw death in the guise of a piper piping away the children from this village and that into a land from which some would not return and others would limp back, lame and crippled. It was Infantile Paralysis or poliomyelitis as the doctors called it, although they knew little more about it than its name. We watched it come out from the city, along the line of the railroad, striking first this village and that and yet few of us believed that it could come near us. But come it did. It was early in July that we received our first real shock and began to wake up to the fact that the piper would be in our community soon.

The children of the chauffeur of Mr. Willard, who lived in Rosemere, only ten miles away, fell ill with the disease and one of them died. A few days later Mr. Willard's little boy, his only child, was also stricken. His whole estate was at once put under quarantine. Mr. Willard called up a neighbor and business friend, Mr. Bridge, urged him to secure a specialist for his (Mr. Willard's) son, and then to do what he could to guard the rest of the community against a spread of the disease. Mr. Bridge at once got busy. He secured a specialist for Mr. Willard's son and the specialist was able to save his life. Next Mr. Bridge organized the neighbors into a public health committee to co-operate with the State Department of Health in enforcing strict quarantine over the whole county and in securing the services of a corps of specialists to study and treat cases in our county and prevent the spread of the disease. It is to the everlasting credit of these specialists and to the medical profession that they came at the first call, giving up their vacations and

on salaries that did not pay for the upkeep of the automobiles they had to use.

Within forty-eight hours Mr. Bridge and his committee had leased a home and laboratories for the doctors in Rosemere. They went to work at once diagnosing suspected cases, isolating positive cases, and establishing a strict quarantine around the centers of infection.

Rapidly as the doctors worked, however, they could not keep pace with the piper. By the time the specialists were established there were already hundreds of cases in the county. The parents of children afflicted became frantic with fear, for, as a rule, the local physician was practically unable to render any assistance. The only possible cure seemed to lie in the serum which the specialists had in small quantities. This serum was prepared from the blood of persons who had recovered from the disease and were immune to it. Night and day the specialists worked, racing in large automobiles from six o'clock in the morning until eleven or twelve at night.

They went into the poorest homes and gave to the poorest Polish and Italian children the same careful diagnosis and treatment that they gave to rich children.

In the midst of their race with death, the specialists came into head-on collisions with some of the obstacles which we had been fighting for years in the attempt to put the fear of the Lord in our village. About a hundred citizens of Pendleton, the nearest village to us on the east, came before the Town Board in a series of two or three meetings, made addresses and presented a petition signed by about three hundred persons. The gist of their protest and petition was that this whole epidemic was largely hysteria caused primarily by the stolen millions of John D. Rockefeller and Andrew Carnegie. These men had established endowments for medical research, according to the petitioners. These endowments were so much honey to which the bees would be attracted. The doctors were the bees. They had manufactured this epidemic in order to

get more honey. They were stinging us. The petitioners further called the doctors "medical bandits" and objected strenuously to the removal of children to the isolation hospitals on the ground that this was an interference with the personal liberties of the parents.

How well we knew that tribe of petitioners! It was the same tribe that came out to every election where an improvement for the town or community was to be voted upon. They were always "agin" the improvement. They voted against every appropriation to increase the efficiency of the public school. "The old school is good enough," they said, "it produced us, what more could you want?" No preacher could convince that tribe that they were not sinless, that the wisdom of the ages had not come to its perfect bloom in them. When it was suggested to them that the doctors knew more about the diagnosis and treatment of the disease than they did, they were insulted. They boldly set up their own opinions over against the trained judgment



of the experts and insisted that the whole town be governed by their opinions instead of by the advice of specialists.

It was useless to argue with the tribe. One could better argue with the hind legs of a mule. Most of them will go to their graves protesting and if they get as far as the Pearly Gates, they will probably present a petition and protest against the architecture and extravagance of the Holy City. The specialists took time from their patients in the effort to make their work and their system clear to these protestors, but while they could give them wisdom they could not give them understanding. So the specialists returned to their patients and allowed the protestors the privilege of howling at the moon.

It is with no little pride that I set down a different story concerning the people of our village. For when the doctors turned to us for help we did not give them a stone. It was a Saturday noon when they telephoned to us that another isolation hospital in our section would be of great value in fighting

the epidemic. Could we secure one for them? It was Mr. Townsend, our President, who received the message. "Sure, we will give you one," he said, "I don't know where it will be, nor how we will get it, but we will have it ready for you by next Tuesday."

A meeting of the Directors of our Association was called that afternoon. A group of gentlemen who owned a comfortable old farm house not far from the station agreed to give the use of the house as a hospital, rent free. Mr. Townsend and I went before the motion picture audience that evening and called for volunteers to omit church the following Sunday and to turn out and clean and disinfect this building and make it fresh and sanitary. A local plumber worked his force of men all that night, connecting a water supply and putting in new fixtures and generally overhauling the plumbing of the old house.

On Sunday morning some seventy or seventy-five people appeared early with mops and brooms and soap and brushes. Some of

these folks were rich and some were poor, but they all set to work with a will and by four o'clock in the afternoon the house had a complete cleaning from garret to cellar (including both), and was in excellent sanitary order for its new purpose. Every window had been washed and mosquito netting nailed on the outside, every floor had been scrubbed, the paper had been stripped from the walls and the walls calcimined. On Monday and Tuesday the telephone and light companies connected their wires and Mrs. Townsend, who had spent Sunday scrubbing the floors and blackening the stove, went to the city and bought hospital necessities, kitchen utensils, linen, blankets, and the thousand and one things necessary to conduct a hospital. Nurses, a housekeeper, a laundress, and a cook were secured, but not without great difficulty. By Tuesday night the building was equipped and turned over to the specialists. On Thursday the patients began to arrive.

Meanwhile we were having our troubles

enforcing quarantine around the houses where the disease had broken out in our own community. We found that moral suasion was not sufficient to keep some of the more ignorant families from breaking quarantine and endangering others. We therefore employed William Burkley as a sanitary inspector, secured his appointment as such from the Board of Health of the township, provided him with a badge and gave him the job of enforcing the quarantine on every infected house. He saw to it that the wants of the various families were attended to, that their mail was secured from the post office and left in a convenient place for them. He saw that the grocery and market wagons did not use crates or baskets that had been in the infected houses. Each family was provided with a box about one hundred feet from the house. Groceries, meat, milk, etc., were placed in this box and the container was afterward burned. The law of the state allowed one wage-earner in each house to go to his work. This, however, would have made

valueless any quarantine arrangement. So we authorized Burkley to keep every wage-earner in his own home and pay him his full wage during quarantine. I am glad to say that most of the employers agreed to pay this wage as soon as requested. Two or three who worked as mechanics were paid out of the funds of the Health Committee, funds raised by generous popular subscription. Burkley had his troubles and his motorcycle was putt-putting over the community from morning till night, but he stuck to his job and soon won the respect and the confidence of the quarantined families as well as the rest of the neighborhood.

Thirteen cases had developed by the time the hospital was in operation and the quarantine established. Eleven of these cases had been taken to other hospitals and the other two to our own.

And now the piper began to find his work too difficult and prepared to leave the town for places more congenial. Our hospital went on serving these other communities as well as

our own for six weeks, caring for twenty-nine patients in all. Only two were lost, and one of these had been brought to the hospital in a dying condition. The per cent. of mortality (less than eight) was much smaller than the records of the neighboring city, which for the period of the epidemic was about twenty-six per cent. And when our cases were discharged and the hospital closed there were but two cases of paralysis to be given after-treatments. Only one of these failed to yield to the after-treatments. Credit for this record belongs to the resident physician and to the nurses who worked skilfully and cheerfully through the hot summer days in spite of the handicaps inevitable to a hastily improvised hospital. It is interesting to know that fourteen of our twenty-nine cases were from Pendleton, the very town where the protest against this "Rockefeller epidemic" had been staged.

When the piper had departed and we had expressed to the doctors and nurses a small measure of our appreciation for their serv-

ices and given what comfort we could to the fathers and mothers whose children the piper had taken, we took an inventory of the lessons we had learned from the epidemic. It had shown us our weaknesses. First among these was the bad sanitation of the average village. Pendleton, for example, had no sewerage system; Hildale had neither sewerage system, water system, nor public dump, and Dellwood had considered every vacant lot a community dump. When these bad sanitary conditions had been revealed a great cry had gone up from a few near-sighted real estate men and small minded merchants, who protested that it was very bad for the community to have these conditions pointed out, that it lowered the price of land and turned away business from the town. This, of course, was rank foolishness. There is no better way to cure bad sanitary conditions than to drag them into the sunlight of publicity.

But worse than the sanitary conditions and not so easy to remedy was the vast amount

of popular ignorance, narrow-mindedness, and common pig-headedness that had been shown in the meetings of protest held before the Town Board. These meetings had not been representative of all America. But they were representative of the *reactionary elements* in the typical American village. This stupidity and narrow-mindedness could not be remedied in a day or a week. Much of it would depart only after a goodly number of funerals. Some of it, like the poor, would be always with us. It was a thing that the prophets and the pioneers of all the ages had had to fight and it had crucified its saviours in every generation. The only cure for it would be education—education in the public school, the churches, the Neighborhood House, and, best of all, the education of the example of good people working steadily on undaunted and undiscouraged by the opposition.

But the epidemic had shown us not only our weaknesses; it had shown elements of encouragement as well. The first of these



had been the spirit of the doctors themselves, not only of the State Department of Health, but our own local physicians. Time was when it was considered good form for a doctor to be absolutely sure in every diagnosis and every remedy. If he admitted a doubt it was supposed that he would lessen the confidence of his patients. Doctors seemed to think that if they confessed to not knowing everything people would not believe they knew anything. That time had passed. The doctors had been frank and honest in admitting their ignorance and impotence in this epidemic. The present-day physician when he doesn't know says he doesn't know, and in so doing he wins the confidence of his patients. Moreover, instead of petty jealousies which had once been common in the medical profession and which, probably, still exist in ordinary times had been swept away by the doctors' spirit of co-operation with each other and with the State Department of Health. They had given to us the impression that they were

eager in their search for truth. By this spirit they had won the admiration of all thinking men and women.

And then there was the co-operative spirit shown by the people of our own village, rich and poor, in fitting up our hospital. I take a great deal of sinful pride in that enterprise. It was a visible and tangible result of a changing spirit, which had been due in part, at least, to the social and civic work in our community. Instead of getting up a petition and a protest they had joined together in a group of sixty or seventy volunteers and done something constructive. And those who afterward, from a distance, saw the children at the hospital sunning themselves in baby carriages and hammocks on the lawn and saw their happy faces and their bright curls were satisfied that they had never put in a better day's work nor spent a dollar to better advantage than upon the fitting up of the hospital.

And finally there was no little encouragement in the fact that the folks who had been

working hardest to drive the piper out of town and into the sea, if possible, were the same folks who were always to be found where help was needed or a good cause was crying for some one to lend a hand. No matter what the good cause—a fire department, a church, a neighborhood house, a workshop, a public school—the old familiar faces were there bearing not only their own burdens, but more than their share of the community's burdens as well. Some of them were elderly and some were young. Some were rich and some were poor. But whoever or whatever they were, they were the salt of the earth; they were the followers of Him who bore in His own heart the burdens of the world.

## CHAPTER XIII

### THE FEAR OF GOD

FIVE years have passed since I took up the task of helping the progressive citizens to put the fear of the Lord in this little village, and since Gordon warned me concerning the fear of man. I am rather astonished now at my presumption then. I don't mind confessing to the reader in strict confidence that I feel a bit humble after the experience of these five years. I have come to understand that I am not the only person to whom the Almighty confides His wishes for the community. Nor am I the only tool He uses in getting His will done. Nor am I the only one whose spirit is willing. In fact, as I look back over these five years I am impressed with the very small proportion of the results accomplished which can be attributed by any hook or crook to me.

These sage reflections are due to a meeting held at our Neighborhood House the other evening. It was a get-together meeting of our Neighborhood Association for the purpose of taking stock of what had been accomplished by the committees of the Association during the last few years.

About two hundred citizens were at the get-together. It can hardly be said that they represented all classes and creeds, for Deacon Bostick was not there, nor the saloon keepers, nor the reactionaries who were "agin" progress and took their pride in the deadness of the village. But the forward-looking citizens were there, some in flannel shirts and some in evening dress. And what they had accomplished for the common good was amazing. Mr. Townsend opened the meeting and called upon the various committees to give an account of themselves and show why they should be allowed to live.

Mr. Grant, the Treasurer, reported all debts paid and money in the bank. That made every one feel good.

Mr. Boisen, for the Finance Committee, gave some clew to the cause of the Treasurer's happiness. It should first be explained that the Association's income, with the exception of that from the Neighborhood House, came largely through various classes of annual dues which were as follows: \$1.00, \$5.00, \$10.00, \$25.00, \$50.00, \$100.00, and \$200.00. All classes had the same privileges and every member joined the class that he could best afford or which seemed to best indicate his degree of interest. As there were about two hundred and fifty members of the Association by this time, the annual income from dues had reached about \$3,800.00. But the work had grown faster than the income, so that during the past year it had become necessary to raise more money. Thereupon Mr. Boisen and his committee had canvassed the neighborhood, persuading citizens who belonged to the Association's class of \$1.00 members to join the \$5.00 class; the \$5.00 members to join the \$10.00 class, etc., etc. Some squirmed,

others felt "that they should first speak with their wives," but the majority came up cheerfully to the class next higher. As a result the income from annual dues was more than doubled.

But how could a busy man like Mr. Boisen give the time to such a canvass? It was just because he was a busy man that he found the time to do it. If he had been an idler or a loafer, he never could have managed it. Deeper than this lay the fact that Mr. Boisen is a twentieth century citizen who appreciates the values and responsibilities of community life and is willing and glad to give his time and personal effort, as well as his money, for the common good. If there were enough like him, the difficulties between capital and labor would melt away.

Next Mr. Stuart, a capable, modest, and altogether charming gentleman, reported that his committee had been looking after our roads, seeing to it that our needs were kept before the county officials and that we, in turn, co-operated with them where our help

was needed. As a result *six of our roads had been macadamized*. Mr. Stuart was sorry that the work had not proceeded more rapidly!

Now came our Education Committee, which said that it had been trying to help the Public School Board in its effort to make our school of the greatest possible service to the children. A kindergarten, a sewing class, a cooking class, and a manual training class had been started by the committee and (with the exception of the manual training class) had been conducted for a year at the Association's expense and then, when the value of the class had been proven, turned over to the School Board and incorporated in its curriculum.

The Mosquito Committee reported an extensive annual campaign against both salt marsh and fresh water mosquitoes. Experts and a force of laborers had been employed. Every property had been inspected, marshes and swamps drained or oiled, and an educational campaign conducted—this each year



for the last eight years. As a result, malaria, at one time a curse to the neighborhood, had become rare. Seventy-five cases in a single summer had not been unusual. Last summer only three cases were reported. This work had so proven its merit that the county had taken it over and would carry it on over the whole of its territory hereafter, paying for it out of tax funds. In the course of the committee's report, there was one item of a swamp turned into a lake of one hundred acres, the banks made steep and the water raised or lowered at various times during the year (by means of a dam) to prevent mosquito breeding.

Mr. Dan Cushman, the contractor, next reported that his Winter Sports Committee had been making good use of this lake as a community skating pond during the winter. An annual ice carnival had been held here during the past few years. There had been skating races, ice boat races, obstacle races, etc. Each carnival had attracted a crowd of from three to four thousand persons. In

addition to these carnivals, his committee had been holding an annual bob sled race, challenging the big bob sleds of the other villages. The cups which he had won were on the shelf in the social room at the Neighborhood House.

The village nurse, an efficient worker with a splendid spirit, told us a story of an invaluable service (although she, of course, did not so describe it) in looking after the health of the community, and especially of the children of the public school—discovering little or incipient ailments and giving them an ounce of prevention and saving a pound of cure. Heaven only knows how many epidemics she has forestalled and how many lives she has saved.

Mr. Fiske, the lawyer, reported for the Law and Order Committee that we had been a pretty well behaved town, but it had been necessary, during the past year, to clean out a gambling den which had started in a pool room. The gamblers had been brought to justice, fined \$500.00 and had since left the

village. His committee had also been called upon to offer gratuitous legal advice on technical aspects of the work of various other committees.

The General Improvement Committee had been busying itself planting Norway Maples along two of the highways. It had put in about three hundred trees. By planting them in quantity, it had been able to secure a certain degree of uniformity and a much lower price to the property owners. It had also secured a public dump and waged campaigns against caterpillars and flies.

Mrs. Freeman, with the assistance of Mrs. Edwards, had been conducting a dancing class every Friday evening at the Neighborhood House through the winter and spring of each year. It had furnished not only instruction, but good recreation to forty or fifty young people every week.

Mr. Gordon, the school principal, who had charge of the work of conducting school gardens in the homes of the children, an-

nounced that about seventy gardens had entered a contest each year for prizes offered by the Association and that, as a result, gardening was increasing in quality as well as quantity, and the village was raising more of its own food and depending less upon Italian fruit wagons.

The Bathing Beach Committee reminded the neighborhood that the \$10,000 bathing pavilion, which they enjoyed every summer, had not "just growed." For five years before that pavilion had been built a bathing cottage had been conducted on the same site by our Association, and it was the experience of this cottage which the committee had made the basis of the appeal to the township, which after one unsuccessful effort, had resulted in the municipal pavilion.

Then came Mrs. Townsend and her report for the Village Library. The report was modest enough, but the plain, unvarnished figures spoke for themselves: three thousand five hundred volumes on its shelves, a substation in every room of the public school,

and a monthly circulation of over six hundred—this in a village of twelve hundred population. “Your record,” wrote the State Librarian, “is second to none in this state.”

Sandwiched in between these reports were those of the other work of which I have already written—the Neighborhood House, the Motion Picture Show, the Community Workshop, the Fire Department, Boy Scouts, Camp Fire Girls, Hospital, etc., etc.

When the last report was finished and the meeting adjourned, the two hundred citizens filed out of the building with a new pride in their community and a deeper respect for their fellow men. Perhaps these are symptoms of the fear of the Lord.

No, we have not become a spotless town, nor a community of saints, nor have we all learned to pull together. The old obstacles are still with us. But we have learned that a few red blooded men and women, by working together, can make life worth living in a small village. They can give it wholesome

recreations, productive employment, a clean bill of health, good roads, a certain amount of physical beauty, and a whole souled, practical religion.

## CHAPTER XIV

### WAR

IF I were writing fiction instead of fact, I could, perhaps, tie up the loose ends of this story and have all the neighbors, even the villains, meet in this last chapter and sing the doxology. But just now the neighbors are too busy to do it. Deacon Bostick is leading a rather feeble attempt to reopen the Methodist Church, where he may hear the old fashioned gospel preached and where he may once again hold office and pass the collection plate. Neighbor Freeman is over in his barn with the craftsmen, making furniture and figuring out profits on common stock. They have made up their loss and have an encouraging balance on the right side of the ledger. Gordon is in the school building teaching the young idea how to shoot, and in his spare minutes counting caterpillar egg

masses that the children have been bringing by the hundreds into his office in a contest to see which can secure the most.

The other neighbors (over thirty years of age) are about their daily business, only working a little harder than usual and trying to eliminate waste and stop all leaks. For the war is upon us. Our saloon keepers are not fighting Germany, but they are fighting each other, which, perhaps, will do us as much good. A new state law has reduced their number from six to three, and the question they are fighting about is, which three shall survive? If only the three that lose would burn up the other three!

Our Neighborhood House is turned into a small armory, where in day times our Red Cross Branch is working, making bandages, dressings, and thinking up new stunts to raise money. Three evenings a week our Home Defense League is drilling here and throwing epileptic fits when they hear the command, "Squads right about, march!" Best of all, there is hardly a neighbor who is not doing



something to help plant these idle acres—even though it does make us perspire some.

The church, too, is doing its bit. Each year it has been mapping out its program of community service, drawing diagrams of it so that even the old saints and the tired business men can understand it. It has been fighting the forces of evil that prey upon the lives of men, waste their energies, and destroy their finer sensibilities. It has been developing the characters of children and young people in a graded Sunday School and working in a score of practical ways to build up in the community a spirit of friendship and human kindness and to establish high ideals for individual and social righteousness. That is patriotic service of the highest order, whether it be peace or war time. Just now it is keeping constantly before the people the spiritual aspects of this war, trying to keep our purposes in it unselfish and the springs of passion free from the poison of hate.

And the young men under thirty—the very young men who helped build this Neighbor-

hood House, who made up our classes and clubs, fire department, and movie audiences—are marching away. Their backs are straight and their heads are high. We are mighty proud that they want to go, and when the war is over and the world is again a safe place for free nations and honest men and virtuous women, we know that we shall be prouder yet of the part our boys have taken.

THE END







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